INDIANA COLLECTION
Lake County Parks

EAVESDROPPING ON THE PAST

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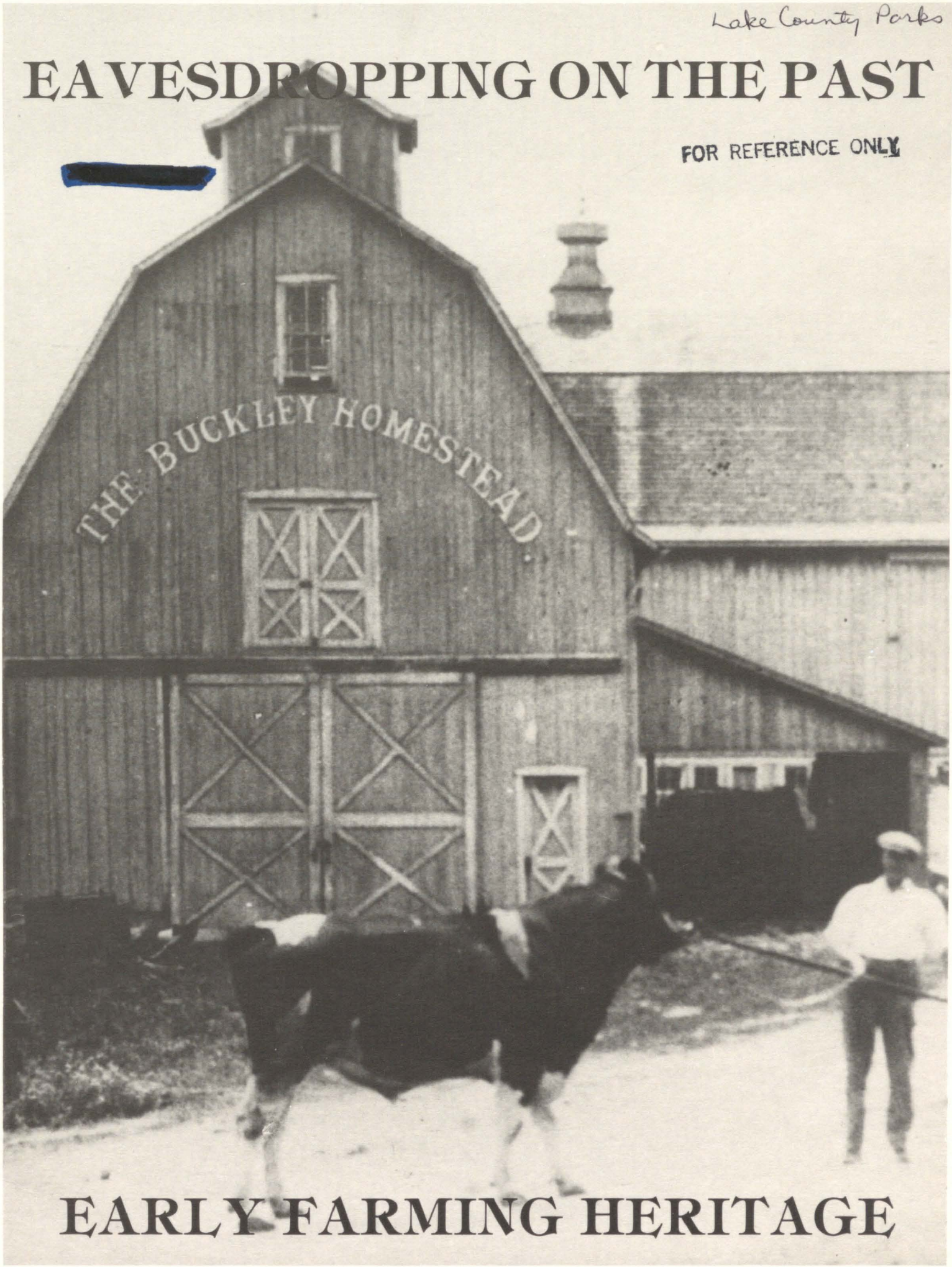

EARLY FARMING HERITAGE

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EAVESDROPPING ON THE PAST
EARLY FARMING HERITAGE

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An oral history project of
The Lake County Parks and Recreation Department
funded in part by
the Indiana Historical Society and
the Indiana Committee for the Humanities

Introduction

When Dennis and Catherine Buckley came to Lowell, Indiana from Ireland in the mid-1800's, they could not have imagined that their homestead would one day be a living museum. But, in 1977, their great-granddaughter, Rose Buckley Pearce, donated this family farm that had supported three generations of Buckleys to the Lake County Parks and Recreation Department.

Visitors to the Buckley Homestead find a combination of traditional farm activities and an historical look at early Lake County farming life. *Eavesdropping on the Past* is another means of preserving some of this important heritage.

Eavesdropping on the Past is drawn from taped interviews of south Lake County residents who have grown up in a farming community. Their childhood recollections of family-life evoke a sense of the past. Statements have been edited for the sake of clarity; words have been placed in brackets providing additional explanation. Excerpts usually follow topic headings, though the interviewer's questions are occasionally added. Bold type distinguishes questions from responses.

Remembrances on individual topics are combined. Sometimes they are comparable, sometimes distinctly different. This is quite understandable, since our participants grew up with varying backgrounds and at different times. The birth year is noted following each response. A brief personal history of each participant is presented in the back of the book.

We hope you enjoy this journey into personal recollections. It may even spark a remembrance of your own.

Acknowledgements

When we began this project, we were unaware of the complications of oral history. Though warned by others who had completed such undertakings, we remained naive of the varying complexities; however our work was most happily done, and we are now anxious to do more interviews.

We are indebted to the Indiana Historical Society, the Indiana Committee for the Humanities and the Lake County Parks and Recreation Department. Without their support, financially and morally, *Eavesdropping on the Past* could not have been completed. We were honored to have received an Indiana Heritage Research grant, funded jointly by the Indiana Historical Society and the Indiana Committee for the Humanities, and appreciate their continued support of community projects such as ours.

Among the many individuals to be thanked are Delila Phillips and Lois Welch. The interviews were conducted by Delila Phillips, interpretor at the Buckley Homestead Living History Farm County Park, and diligently transcribed by Lois Welch of the Lake County Parks and Recreation Department. Hours of work went into these key tasks, without which there would be no project.

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Most of all, we thank the following individuals for sharing their memories and allowing us to take a peek into the past with them.

Louis Alyea
Jim Baker
Don Barman
Louis Beseke
Elmer Bloede
Eleanor Brannock
Robert Brannock
Ray Corning
Fred (Jim) Dahl
Clarence Harding
Dave Howkinson
Robert Howkinson
Earl Little
Rose Buckley Pearce
Roger Schnurlein
Victor Taylor
Lawrence Turnquist

Becky Crabb, Project Director
Sandy Basala, Editor

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Eavesdropping on the Past

He just worked himself to death. He wanted to get ahead, he wanted to get that land, wanted to get it cleared. You know, it was all furry and trees, hither and yon. He wanted to get that working, no taxes hardly to pay, you know, and you could own the land. Couldn't do it in Ireland. This was thrilling to him. Here he was with three sons and a daughter come in and a wife on this land. And to own the land was such a gorgeous thing. You have no idea what that meant to that man and his offspring. Yes, like I told you when the old barn was there, there was that creek back of the old barn. That's still there. I can see grandpa standing on the hill there, where the house is out in front. And he'd say, "Charlie", dad would be on the grass, grandpa say, "Charlie, just look, look it, can you find anything any nicer than this? Where could you own land like we own? Only in America," he'd say. "No place else," he spoke, "only in America." And I know when [he prayed], he prayed for America because he prayed a lot. He'd get beside the bed; he didn't pray in bed. Get down on his knees and ah, you see he was lucky he owned a farm. He did pretty good for being a migrant and come here with nothing.

Rose Buckley Pearce

From Horses to Tractors

From 1903, that was when I was born, until spring of 1924, I lived on the farm out three and a half miles east of town [Hebron]. And I helped and worked on the farm from the time I was born until I left there.

We never had anything except horse equipment. The tractors were just coming in. A few people had them. They, so-called modern farmers of that time, were beginning to get farm tractors. And I would say that a majority of the farming was done, in our neighborhood at least, with horses.

Louis Alyea, (1903-1989)

What kind of horses did you have?

Just non-descript type of horses. Just plow horses. They weren't fancy breeds. I think my father used to buy, sometimes he'd buy ice wagon horses out of Chicago that had sore feet from walking on the pavement.

Bob Howkinson, b. 1919

Between 1910 and 1920 how many horses and what kind of plows were you using?

Well, a single-bottom plow, they used three horses on it. And then they got two-bottom plows and they'd use from, oh, anywhere from four to five horses on it. You could plow, oh, with five horses, you could plow about five acres a day.

Usually, they tried to get the ground ready to start and plant, oh, anywhere from the 5th to the 10th of May, but April was really the month to get the plowing done and get ready to plant the corn. Lots of times you'd harrow it before it come up. That'd kill some of your weeds. And then you'd start as soon as it was up four or five inches, why, you'd start in with a cultivator.

Would a two-horse cultivator be before 1920?

Yeah. They used that one, that kind would be around 1900 and then by 1910 to '12, they got the riding cultivator. They had a seat on it and you could work those handles on the seat. Some of them had. . . you'd work them with your feet. Then, well, then they got a little bigger. Then they got the two-row cultivators, horse cultivators, and you'd put three or four horses on it and it went a little faster. That would be probably around 1924-25, they got the two-row horse cultivators.

Was the cultivator to loosen the dirt for the corn to grow better?

Yeah, that keeps the weeds down. That kills the weeds, too. You'd cultivate, you'd be cultivating corn till the fourth of July. In those days they checked, they checked the corn. You had a row this way and they had buttons on a wire and they'd supposed to check, so you would plow it crossways or lengthwise. That would give you pretty good weed control.

Is that where they came up with the saying "knee high by the fourth of July?"

Yeah, yeah. Well, now corn gets bigger than that quite a lot of the time. That was kind of standard. They had some that got bigger than that. It just depended on the moisture and the season.

Earl Little, 1901

They had to have draft horses earlier because the tractors didn't start coming in until about in the thirties. . . . They must have had at least six horses because some of those things took six horses to pull them, in tandem. And the big plows. . . when they went to the two-bottom plow or three-bottom plow, you had to have six horse on them to pull.

Where did they go to do their horse trading and cattle buying?

You know, people used to travel around in those days, from farm to farm, and do a lot of horse trading that way.

Bob Brannock, b. 1908

Dad used to always feed the horses good. I mean, if you were working and you stopped for lunch, them horses got their grain before he went to eat, you know. And so, on the same way in the morning, you know. They would get their grain first thing. And at night, they let them cool down and everything. And then, Dad always believed in feeding them because that's. . . that's your livelihood.

They had that forty acres of marsh down there and they were farming that and that's what Dad used to say. That you'd get down in there, he says, and if that wind'd shift to the north, you'd better get the horses the hell out of there, cause, he says, it'd be like a sponge. They'd go right down to their belly, you know. And, of course, that's what he maintained, he says, they would go right down.

He says a lot of people didn't take care of their horses the way they should. And, of course, some of them had the idea, well, there's more where that come from, you know. Work them until they drop and then get some more.

Don Barman, b. 1932

What kind of machinery did you have?

We had a walking plow in the beginning. And then we had, what you call, a sulky plow, I guess, where you rowed. We had walking cultivators. Cultivator pulled with two horses and you walked behind. One-row cultivators. That's when you walked behind and horses pulled it. You cultivated one row. And then we got a cultivator with a seat on it, did one row. Then we got a big two-row cultivator, cultivated two rows at a time....

Now, this is all horse equipment. Hay rakes. Manure spreader, and grain binder. All those hardworking tools. Wagons. Then we got mowers and the transition from horses...we just cut the poles off a lot of equipment, original mowers, and pulled them with tractors. And they didn't last long. Rakes, hay rakes. Equipment couldn't take it, take the tractor....

I just didn't like to work with horses. That's one phase of farming that I did not like. Well, they could kick you, and if he wasn't, didn't use him enough, he could get onery and it just was a slow process of farming. One of the slow processes that we went through. But we had to have them and we didn't change until early in the 1940's. We had horses up till then, but we didn't use them...We started using tractors, oh, I think my dad had a tractor in the twenties. I know he had one of the first tractors around here. But when I'm talking about horses, we used them for minor jobs and during the depression. We thought it was cheaper to get a horse out than it was a tractor cause you couldn't afford to buy gas to do small jobs with, you know.

Dave Howkinson, b. 1916

My dad had a tractor when I was seven years old, so that would have been around 1927. He had an old bull tractor. That's what brought the little farm to mind, because he had it down there and I always remember the tractor because the radiator ran horizontal to the tractor. It didn't run crossways like they did then. Somebody called it an old bull tractor.

But that was the way they did the farming in those days. You sat out on a tractor with a metal seat on it. First one I had, had steel lugs on the wheels and everything. I never did plant any corn except with horses.

Fred (Jim) Dahl, b. 1920

Our first tractor was a Fordson. We must have got it about 1927, maybe back in there someplace. It had a pulley and we had a belt-driven Letz mill to grind feed for the cows, but it was for plowing and discing, also.

Lawrence Turnquist, b. 1905

I think about the first tractor work Dad ever done was out here when he worked for Tom Grant on his farm. He had one of those old tractors with iron wheels and everything. He had about the first tractor around. They had an old, that would be the old steel wheel tractors. I was about four, I think. I hadn't gone to school yet. We was out there a couple of years and that'd be around twenty, twenty-one.

Jim Baker, b. 1917

Well, he [father] was in the farm implement business. He started in 1923.

What kind of farm implements did he sell in 1923?

He had the, called the Allwork Tractor. And then after the Allwork Tractor, he started in with John Deere.

How was the Allwork Tractor different?

I really can't tell you much about that. It wasn't a very popular tractor and it wasn't made very long. I'd say it was 1926 when he started in with John Deere, then he dropped the Allwork line. It was more of a speciality, but at the time there wasn't many other tractors made.

Were many people around here buying tractors that early?

No. No. He sold, he always told me, about six or seven the first year. And then after that, why, it gradually picked up until he took over the John Deere line. When the John Deere line come, why, it was good for twenty-five or thirty a year.

So most people around here were still farming with horses?

Yes.

Did he carry equipment for horses, too?

Right, they had the old binders which were horse pulled and plows, and had all the wagons.

When it was threshing time or someone needed a shredder, did he ever have any that he hired out?

Yeah, we kinda leased it out or rented it out. He had a shredder he used to do. Corn shredder, did that quite often. My dad owned it and I guess they were pretty expensive. It didn't take a long operation at a farm to do their work, so, I think they just rented it for a day or two. Did the job and then went to the next one. That'd be a corn shredder. If they had it one half a day, they'd be all done, then go to the next farmer.

Did most people use their tractors to run their other equipment instead of actually working them in the field?

Right. Well, they used them for, had power take-off belts or pulleys on them and used them for their grinders or hammermills that day for grinding. They used and put silage up in the silos, you know. Maybe they had a horse or something in the field pulling a chopper and then they'd get the silage. Why they had the tractors hitched on there....

Well, you know, a horse, you can work it so many hours and it had to be fed and rest, and a tractor, economy brought it on, I guess. If you wanted to plow fourteen hours a day, you could. But the horse, it was limited. And the heat bothered a horse, you know. And the hottest weather, well, July when you was harvesting and cutting wheat and that, pulling the binder that way, it was hard on them.

Note: The Allwork Tractor was made by the Electric Wheel Company of Quincy, Illinois and was abandoned in 1929.

Clarence Harding, b. 1918

And I used to know a man that run the reduction truck here in Lowell. And in the forties he got some of the best horses that ever lived. Just taking them down the road and shooting them. Loading them up because the farmers said that the government said to get rid of them and buy tractors. And some of them seemed to be doing right well, and some of them seemed to be falling by the wayside. But when, when they did that they, this was my dad's opinion, they lost their dependency and things. Depending on someone else, see. The next generation of people will be lacking something.

Vic Taylor, b. 1916

Crops

We farmed with horses altogether. We had to have a certain amount of acreage for hay. That was one of the main feeds, were hay and well now you don't see much of it either, but pretty near everybody had cows, you know. They'd get their own milk, and had chickens and hogs. Now very few folks have a dairy.

I suppose half the folks shipped milk, or cream or something. They had a cream separator and run the milk through that and make butter out of the cream and if they had too much milk, they'd feed it to the pigs.

Well, hay is a crop that you cut the whole thing. Now, your wheat and oats, you separate the grain from the straw. Now hay, you just cut the whole thing, the blossoms and break it up. It's got leaves on it and you dry it out and, well, they used to have hay loaders and they'd load it up loose. But now, they've got balers, automatic balers.

What was the hay loader?

Well, you hooked it on behind your hayrack. Then this hay was in rows, maybe so wide, and this [hayrack] had a drum on it that picked that hay up. And then the hayloader had a drum that would run around this way, and that'd push it up on to your wagon. The fellow up on the wagon had to load it then.

Earl Little, b. 1901

Making hay is work. Making hay in those days you'd, I drove a team on a wagon and had a hay loader behind. And the slats were breaking all over. The temperature was always 85 or 90. And you'd bring a load home and my dad, we called it sticking the fork. That's when you'd put the fork in the hay and you'd drive the horse and then either you or your younger brother, if you didn't drive the horse, you had to go up on the mow, and mow that.

We never pitched hay. We always had a little hay loader. But making hay was, oh, we had to pull that load of hay, our fork full of hay up in the barn with a rope...came clear through the barn and out this end, and we'd end up with the horse up here by the house. And then you'd turn around with the horse and go back and they'd pull the fork back and get another load on the wagon. It was, your dad would be back here pulling on the fork and he couldn't pull it because the kid on this end or the horse was standing on the rope. And because of the heat and the temperature and the job, everybody got short-tempered.

Dave Howkinson, b. 1916

It was always my job to pull the trip rope when they put the hay up...and this fork came down, went up. And I don't remember how it was powered, if a tractor did it or a horse, or what. All I remember was, it went up and hit the rail, you know, and then went down and they would yell at me, and I had this big long rope, when I was to pull. I'd pull it and the hay would fall. But I don't recall the power of it and how we did it. I assume it was a tractor with a power takeoff.

Ray Corning, b. 1929

That was my favorite odor, was that alfalfa from the hayloft. It smelled like tea. It always had that delicious. . . And I can remember we used to have trouble with barns burning, you know, from. . . that was very prevalent then. It was often, you know, you'd hear, so-and-so's barn burnt last night from the spontaneous combustion.

Ray Corning, b. 1929

Well, up until 1925 or so, you didn't use much fertilizer. They had crop rotation. They had two years of corn and oats and maybe wheat. Then you'd put it in hay, clover alfalfa for a year or two, and that kind of loosened the ground up and got it going again. They put corn after the hay crop.

When did they start doing that?

Well, as long as I can remember, but now they've kind of quit. They've got the fertilizer and things now. And oh, the last 15 to 20 years they've started growing corn, corn, corn right after the other.

Earl Little, b. 1901

See, they didn't fertilize like that. Natural fertilizer. They took the old manure spreaders out there with a team of horses and spread the manure out on the field. That's a natural fertilizer you got out there. They didn't have the chemical fertilizer. That didn't come until late. See, the old manure bucket they had back there used to run on track. They'd go out there and dump it and then they'd throw it in the manure spreader and take it out in the fields.

Bob Brannock, b. 1908

Of course, the oldtimers, there, you know, when the fertilizers come in, they were very skeptical. Manure was the only fertilizer they ever knew of. And when you go from that era to this, to the modern with the herbicides and the pesticides and the. . . and they surely didn't believe in any of that stuff. You know, they had their own ways of doing things and that was it.

If you would plow one acre of ground with a walking plow, they'd figure that you walked seven miles. And if you had a reversing plow where you would go back in the same furrow again, then I don't know how much they had that figured. I think you'd cut two miles off or something like that because you didn't have to go to the end.

Times have really changed now. Years ago you didn't use your certified seed. You would take your oat, well, a lot of people still do, in fact, I do sometimes, take your soybeans and your oats and that out of your bin, run them through your cleaner and reuse them.

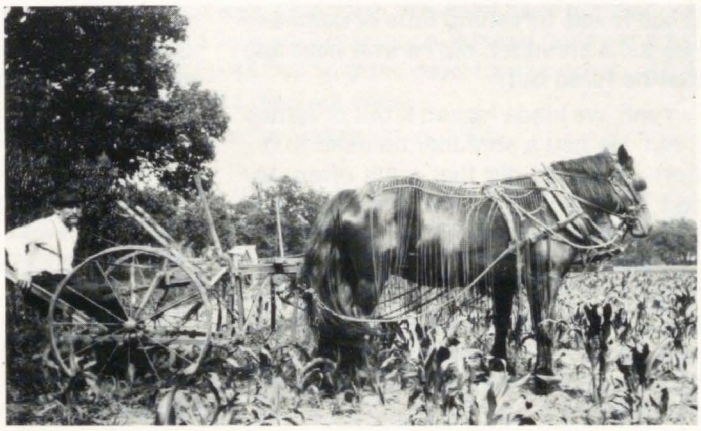
Don Barman, b. 1932

And in the fall of the year before the corn got thoroughly dried and you could start husking, you'd walk through the fields and pick out the ideal with the sacks hung over your shoulder, and pick out what you thought was the ideal looking ears. You'd bring them in the house and dry them and use them for seed corn the following year.

Lawrence Turnquist, b. 1905

For corn, you just went out to the corn crib and got the best looking ear of corn and that's what you shelled and. . . planted the next year, you know. And wheat would be the same thing.

Bob Howkinson, b. 1919



Well, a lot of seed, now clover, clover and Timothy seed, a lot of them just waited until it got ripe and got their own. Then there'd be some places where they'd sell it. At the elevators, they'd get in, Timothy and clover seed and you could buy it by the sack full. But quite often clover was the second crop. They'd let it get ripe and cut it and get their clover seeds from that.

Earl Little, b. 1901

You could do check-row planting at that time. It was aggravating at times, too. You'd have 80 rods of wire stretched out a quarter of a mile. And you'd get to the end of the row and you'd turn your team around and line it up on the marker for going back on the next two rows. You'd get off and start to stretch the wire and if your wire was old and it had been used for a number of years, why, every once in a while it would break when you would put your weight against it. And always the breaks seemed to be at least half-way back across the field. And of course, you'd have to go down there and splice it together and go back then and stretch the wire again.

The nice thing about check-row corn, you could plant three kernels in every hill and they were about 36 or 38 inches apart. Then the theory was they would line up so you would have rows crosswise in the field, too, and you could go what you call cross-cultivate. You'd get the weeds out between the rows or that were growing in the corn row. That was the idea of the check-row planter. With the coming of herbicides, why, you didn't have to do that, you know.

Lawrence Turnquist, b. 1905

We grew corn and we grew wheat. We grew oats. I remember oats very well. And we grew soybeans. That was . . . that would be it.

Ray Corning. b. 1929

Well, you get started in October, but then, you know, when you husked it by hand, it'd take you. . . you might be husking, oh, up till after Thanksgiving. It could be 6 to 8 weeks, picking your corn.

Do you know what time the first corn picker came along?

Well, they didn't have very many of them until 1930. Probably around 1933 or somewhere along in there before they got very many corn pickers. The first ones, they picked the ears off. They didn't do like a combine. You brought them up and stored them in the, for the ears. . . .

By hand . . . oh, some of these guys could husk a hundred, they had professional almost. They could husk over a hundred bushel of corn a day. That's a lot of corn. My dad was pretty fast, but some of those that husked fast, didn't husk good. A good man that knows how to husk corn, he never left any husk on. Some of these guys that'd go like crazy, they'd put some husk in it. There wasn't supposed to be any husk left on.

Lawrence Turnquist, b. 1905

What is silage?

Well, you put green corn in the silo. That was before it was mature enough to harvest.

About what time of the year?

Late August or first of September.

And what was that used for?

That was more for cattle feed. They chopped it up in half to ¾ of an inch lengths. And then they packed it. The silos were supposed to be air-tight so it didn't get any air in it, why, it wouldn't spoil.

Why'd they pick it green?

Well, if you waited until it got ripe, it wouldn't pack. It'd be fluffy and air pockets in it, and it'd spoil. They could start feeding it right away.

Earl Little, b. 1901

My job used to always be, when I was a kid, was inside the silo. And I used to have to keep the stuff even there as it blows in. Then stomp, stomp it down and put another door in the silo. The kids always got that job . . . and then you'd take a thing off the pipe as it goes up and put another door in and you'd keep tromping it down. You make sure that it's all even and you keep tromping it down and keep working your way up. That, like I say, that was cause I was a kid then. That was always my job.

I was in the transition. I can remember plowing with horses with a sulky plow and with a walking plow. And now I can remember going out there six-bottom plowing.

Don Barman, b. 1932

Were insects a problem?

They had chinch bug in '34. We dragged harrows around the edges of the field to create a dust trail. We used creosote to. . . . we'd sprinkle the creosote down a strip to keep 'em from going across it.

Bob Howkinson, b. 1919

The biggest thing I remember was the chinch bug in 1934. We tried to make trenches and pull the fence posts down through the trench to create dust. We used a creosote line, had a line going around the field to keep [them] from going in the field. We worked our full . . . . and every once in a while you'd have this trench and you'd dig a fence post hole and all the chinch bugs would go to the trench, go down the trench and fall in the post hole. Then you'd kill them some way. All we did was a lot of work and we didn't solve anything.

Then they first came out with the corn bore. It took a couple years, another evolution. What are you going to do with them? You had plows with all kinds of equipment on and you'd get all the corn under the ground. Every last ounce of stalk had to be plowed under. That's the way the corn bore, they said at the time, was evolved in the next spring. If you plowed him under, you wouldn't have any. But we did anyway.

And tuberculosis in cattle. They were tested. We had tuberculosis. Every county, I guess, or state, or somebody paid for tuberculine testing, but we don't do that any more.

Dave Howkinson, b. 1916

When I think of a granary, I think of walking in it and smelling grease and oil and dry corn. You know, they parked the tractors or the equipment in the galleyway in the middle. And that's the first thing I . . . that brings back the memory of a granary to me, is walk in there and smell oil on the ground, grease.

Ray Corning, b. 1929

How did people fill the granary before they had elevators?

With a scoop shovel.

You mean you carried it? How did you get it up high?

Well, they never would've built that type of a granary until they had an elevator, see. You just didn't have that kind. You had the lower kind that you could scoop into, see. So, until a farmer was big enough or had the money to build this big type of a granary, why then, he also came along with the elevator part of the building. See, there used to be on that upright elevator, a tumbling rod that run out away from the building with a sweep on it that they put the two horses on. And they went around and that sweep turned that tumbling rod that run the elevator.

So it wasn't electric?

No. No. It wasn't electric, nor was it gasoline. It was horse-power.

Vic Taylor, b. 1916

Dairy Farming

We had Holsteins for the quantity of milk they give, and meat. They were a good animal, too. Good sturdy animal, Holsteins. The other breeds, Jerseys and Guernseys, milk production is lower, but the butterfat's higher. And it all depends which you want, a Ford or a Chevy. Whatever you prefer, that's what you pick, you know. And we picked Holsteins.

Did you have automatic watering in your barn?

We've have that quite a while. Yes. We had that back in . . . the automatic watering was also in the twenties. With a gravity feed. In other words, we had a large tank in this milkhouse. We pumped the water in that and then the water was fed out to the barn by gravity. In other words, it wasn't pressure, wasn't under pressure.

Dave Howkinson, b. 1916

We got our first electricity on the farm in 1927. And I was only about eight years old, and I think that we had some gasoline engines to do some milking, you know, prior to that time. But the early milking, from 1914, that was done by hand. My mother used to milk. She used to do the milking or some of the milking, too.

Bob Howkinson, b. 1919

Where did you sell your milk?

Milk went to Chicago. To the Pullman Dairy, which is now out of business. I forget who took them over. And I can't remember some of the other dairies. There were two or three dairies in the course of the years that we were in the dairy business, that got our milk. And it went in cans. Milk truck would come by and pick up your milk every morning.

We started dairying just after they stopped shipping milk on the, what was the Monon Railroad. There was a little milk stand. The train would stop about three-quarters of a mile north of our place, called Farmdale. I think by the time we were in the dairy business, why, the milk was being taken in by truck.

What kind of health standards did they have for dairy farmer?

I presume, although I can't remember, that we had periodic inspections ever since we started in the dairy business. I think the inspector worked for the, for the dairy, not for the city of Chicago.

Oh, not for the government then?

No. No. And he would come around, and of course, we always took a very dim view of all that sort of thing. You know, what business was it of his if we were...we knew what we were doing, we thought. But, on the whole, we got along very well.

Did you have to disinfect twice a day like they do now?

No. No. You have to whitewash your barn every spring. You'd spend a day sweeping down the cobwebs, getting ready to whitewash. The first few years, I guess, we mixed our own and did it with a brush. It wasn't long after that the power sprayers came into use. And someone would come around and, with a pressure sprayer, and whitewash your barn.

What kinds of cows did you have?

Well, a Holstein is a big cow and generally she gives larger quantity of milk, more pounds per year. And also, it was a trade-off between butterfat and quantity of milk. And with the Holstein, under normal conditions, it would provide a high enough butterfat content to meet the minimum standards, and you've got quite a few more pounds in the course of the year from the Holstein than you did from some of your other breeds. So, people that were in the fluid milk market, it's almost 100 per cent Holstein herds.

Was the milking done by hand?

Originally, yes. Although milking machines, the larger herds had milking machines at the time.

In the twenties?

Yes.

Were they electric?

No. Powered by gas engine. In the wintertime there was always a few anxious moments cause you'd get the engine started and when the temperature was down around zero, and....it was so different from what it is now that I marvel that one generation or one lifetime has seen the change.

Lawrence Turnquist, b. 1905

Did they have any special sanitation rules you had to follow in the early days?

No. And that's one of the wonders that I still wonder about, is milk being on the milk train in a milk can, set on the stand maybe a short time, go on a train for an hour and a half to Chicago. And then they'd transfer it to somewhere else...and then taking it to the dairy. I wondered how people even existed on that milk. I mean, you know, there was no sanitation. They didn't know what sanitation rules were. Just get it up here before it sours, you know. And nowadays we have a lot of different rules.

Dave Howkinson, b. 1916

As far as the law is concerned, the laws more or less just pertained to the quality of the milk. The milk was tested. Of course, then the barn had to be clean and manure piles kept away and all that.

Vic Taylor, b. 1916

Do you recall if they had any inspectors come out to the dairy barn?

Yes, they had some.

What were the requirements?

Well, it had to be so much clorine or what put on the floor and they would check how well the barn was clean... in the thirties, a little before probably. And they were real fussy in the milkhouse, I remember. The temperature of the milk had to be cooled. In them days you didn't have much in the refrigerator line, so it's all done with fresh water.

Clarence Harding, b. 1918

The milk was pulled from the barn over to the milkhouse with a cart and cooled over here, which is quite a distance from the barn. It was cooled by water only. Water only.

Was that run with the windmill?

Yeah. Originally we had a windmill. Then later we acquired electric motor on a pump, an electric driven pump. We received electricity in 1926, one of the first farmers in the area to have electricity. We carried that from a half mile at the south end of Cedar Lake. My dad bought the electricity up here. Paid it by himself. We were one of the first. Because I remember we also had one of the first radios in the area...and then we went into mechanical refrigeration in milk cans.

In milk cans?

In other words, the milk was mechanically cooled in the tank coolers, they called them. Tank coolers. That's where they put the water, milk can in a cold, ice bank....

Instead of just your creek water running in for well water?

Yeah, that's right. You used the mechanical refrigeration to cool the water with an ice bank, they called them. Ice bank coolers.

It's still the same setup. It's just how you got your water cold that's different?

Yes, it circulates around the cans. In other words, with the ice it cooled the milk a lot more efficiently.

Dave Howkinson, b. 1916

We had about 30 head of cattle, all Jerseys, some of them full-blooded Jerseys. Which they're noted for not high butterfat, but they're also noted for a heck of a lot of milk. So, that's what we raised. We shipped our milk from Creston. That's why Creston was our home base because we had to go there every day and take our milk to the depot, put it on the Monon Railroad train, in eight-gallon cans, no sanitation, no ice, ship it to the Clover Leaf Dairy in Chicago and that's the way the milk was kept. Every farmer had to have a milk tank and that's where they would keep their milk cans. And we had ours fixed so that as the windmill went up and down, it pulled a rope and it stirred these cans so that it wouldn't all get part hot and part cold. So that way it wouldn't spoil. So we had a stirrer in it.

Roger Schnurlein, b. 1903

Who did you sell your milk to?

To Dixie Dairy. They picked it up. Well, at first, well, we didn't ship then but our neighbor use to ship. They used to take the milk to the Erie Railroad and it used to go in railroad cars to Chicago. I can remember that because we used to sit on the milkcans going to school to catch a ride in the morning.

Elmer Bloede, b. 1912

You pumped the water usually by windmill or electric motor or gasoline engine into the cooling tank. And from there the water ran out and ran to the stock tanks out scattered around the yards. And when the milk truck came, you'd pull the cans out of the water cooler and set them on the truck and away it went to market. Earlier days they used to haul it down into, my father used to haul it by wagon down to the depot where it went into Chicago on the Monon Railroad.

Bob Howkinson, b. 1919

The milk went by train, down at the Monon depot here. Right down by the lake they picked milk up. That's what they

called the milk run, you know. Milk was picked up at Creston, Cedar Lake, Farmdale, Lowell. Only way we could get to the train was a horse and wagon. And that was our first...milk from this barn was shipped by train back in 19...well, in the twenties, early twenties. And, cause my dad started milking cows in this barn in 1914.

When did the dairies start coming to the farm to pick up milk?

I would say in the early thirties, or late twenties, maybe. And all your milking was by hand. You'd do your day's work and then you'd come in to do your chores. Why you always used to say, well, that's when you rest up, is when you milk. You know, when you're milking. Well, I don't think that was, but at least you're on the stool and you're sitting down. That was when you rest up.

And, of course, the milking machines first came in at that time there, but still you had to watch real close. And then you always had to, what they call, strip 'em at the end there because you'd have to get the last milk out of the cows and everything. Now they're perfected, where you put the machine on there and you got the pipe line and it goes. Then you would put your milk in your cans and you had to take your milk to your milkhouse and then, if there was enough wind for your windmill to work, it would bring the water out of the well and that would cool your milk. Just about everybody had cows, had a dairy farm or had cows, just about everybody.

Prior to selling it to the dairies here, we used to haul it to the railroad and ship it. In fact, I got milk cans yet with Barman Brothers, Erie Railroad, Crown Point, Indiana, with the tag on it. I got egg cartons. We would ship eggs on the Erie Railroad. Even your veal calves and stuff like that. If you had a couple good veal calves, you would butcher them, skin them out and pack them in ice and send them in. And you had contacts in the city there that took care of your farm supplies and that. Cheese, we used to, not myself but the old folks, used to make cheese and butter and ship that.

Don Barman, b. 1932

As first it was the train and then there was the collecting depot where you dumped your milk in the cans and they shipped it either by truck or by train to Chicago. So then later on, when dairy farmers quit dairying, why then they just had a big truck that took the cans directly to Chicago. Most of that went to Borden's from here. But, most of the farmers around here like to take their milk in, you know, so they could stop in some of those places like Louie Berg's. Make a little longer morning, you know. And they bought their supplies. Get the groceries and things like that. Boy, I'd forget my list and bring that home or don't come home, you know.

Vic Taylor, b. 1916

Farm Animals

My mother always kept a Barred Rock chicken and they're the hardest thing to clean that there is. And I don't know why, but it seemed like they were good meat chicken and they were a pretty good layer, too. But they were hard to clean because they were dark feathers, see. When I was little and I'd come home from school, you know, we had to usually gather the eggs, feed the chickens and bed the horses and the cows, and then put them in and feed them. And then we usually ate supper, and after supper we went out with the lantern and milked the cows.

Vic Taylor, b. 1916

Course, a lot of chickens run loose in those times, you know. They run around the farm yards, loose, and you used to find eggs around. First place they'd lay was the grass and stuff.

Bob Brannock, b. 1908

Yeah, mom kept chickens, geese and ducks. A couple of ornery geese. I know they got my sister and I in the chicken house up on the roof once and wouldn't let us down. We hollered bloody murder. Course we were inseparable, you know. Wherever she was, I was. Wherever I was, she was.

Jim Baker, b. 1917

Who took care of the chickens? On our farm, my mother never did any of this thing because we had my brother and I, who were able to do it. We had all the outside farm work. And I would say that as far as the chickens were considered, I think most of the time on my farm my dad did most of the work.

Even feeding chickens and taking eggs?

Oh, we had a specialty. We had chickens more like they do it today. We'd cook the feed for them and had them in the warm in the wintertime. Cause we had a market for, we didn't sell our eggs to the grocery store. We sold our eggs direct by the case to Chicago. So, it made a little difference in our operation of eggs. Now, my grandparents didn't. They'd take theirs into Crown Point and sell them. But their operation was a lot different. Their chickens just run loose, whereas ours were in coops. They didn't run all over the farmyard. They were more like today's do it. And this goes back in the early, before twenties. That's how we did it.

My dad was a good farmer. Although he didn't have many modern conveniences, he made things work. He had good chicken coops and had a yard for them to run in, but they didn't run all over the house yard. They had a place where they were supposed to stay. They didn't always stay.

We also raised turkeys. In those days you'd just let, you'd have, well, we'd probably carry over about seven turkey hens and a gobbler and you never worried about them. They'd take off and you didn't know where they went to next and they were hard to keep track of. It'd be several days before you knew where they even were laying their eggs. But we never picked them up. And when that old turkey got her number of eggs that she wanted, she nested on them, but they'd always bring them home. You didn't have to feed the turkey in those days because they roamed the neighborhood. They were like wild birds, but they'd always come home to roost, them things. That was the turkey business.

We also had a wake-up bird in our yards, a guinea. They wake you up every morning, you know. Oh, those guineas. Boy, they really are noisy birds. Did you know what they kept a guinea for? To keep the hawks away. This is what they were really for. They always had a few guineas to scare the hawks away. I know this is true because, boy, they put up a real fuss if there's a hawk around, a guinea does.

Roger Schnurlein, b. 1903

We had Plymouth Rock. I remember them. Leghorns, Barred Rocks, I guess they called them. We had a few geese around. That's about it. You always had a few . . . hogs were another thing. They had just a small number. We had maybe eight or ten sows and we kept them. We went from small shed to small hog houses to completely out of the business.

Well, we eventually got rid of the horses, got rid of the chickens, got rid of the hogs and expanded the dairy. Just like most farmers, they either went to chickens or hogs or dairy. They didn't do the combination of all of them anymore. You go to any farm today, it's either a hog farm or a dairy farm or a chicken farm. They don't have a little of each because they can't afford to do it that way. In other words, it's a slow evolution, you know. You go from horses to tractors, and how long did it take to get rid of the horses. You kept the dumb things around because you thought you were going to use them.

Dave Howkinson, b. 1916

Grandpa would go out, and in those days, the orchard was there and they would trim the orchard in March, and all those trimmings would be stacked in different stacks, piles. One there and another one 50 yards from it. Scattered around. And mother had turkeys. They would make their nest in those piles of debris from the trees to lay their eggs in. And ah, I can never remember my mother ever cooking a turkey. They were precious, you know, those turkeys.

Rose Buckley Pearce

Even the buggy horse had a use, for pulling a planter or something. But, pulling a plow, you had to have the draft horse. You couldn't pull them with the light horses. But we had two that you could ride or tie to the buggy cause we had, maybe two horses for a buggy, surrey. But, we farmed with about four horses. That's all. They [buggy horses] could run or pull a rake or something like that. Not a plow or a binder or something. You wouldn't put them on that. Just wasn't a heavy enough horse.

Every Thursday they'd have in certain times of the year, they'd have these horse sales and the farmer'd bring in their horses and tie 'em up around the courthouse square (Crown Point) and have an auction and sell these horses. And they had horse barns, of course, in those days. Meeker was one of them. He'd buy and sell horses at the auction, or the farmer just sold his own. I remember that.

Roger Schnurlein, b. 1903

Years ago, you know, maybe one or two people would have a bull and they'd either take your cow or bring the bull over. Everybody didn't keep a bull cause you didn't interbreed them. Maybe one or two in the neighborhood would, maybe service about five. You know, maybe two would take about five farms and then you'd only keep the bull so long. You'd maybe trade it off with someone else.

Don Barman, b. 1932

How did you keep the water tanks for the animals from freezing in the wintertime?

Used to have coal, coal-fired burners in there which you had to . . . well, at first it wasn't easy. We didn't even have those as I recall. And then later we got things we had to build a fire in. Now they use entirely different things. They use electric heaters now, even for outside.

Well, you had to knock a hole in the ice. These were concrete tanks and they were reinforced so they didn't break. And they had sloping sides so that if the ice got too heavy, why, it would tend to slide up instead of breaking it. But then, we got coal heaters that we stuck in the tank and you had to go light those up.

We also had two types of sheep. One time we had a flock of sheep and they were pretty much decimated by dogs. You know, the dogs would get in and kill them. But then, back in 1929 or thereabouts, my father bought, I guess, one or two carloads of sheep out of the stockyards. We were to bring them up, unload them up at the Monon depot down by the south end of the lake from a double-deck car and run them up through part of the farms to the farm place and fed them and lost money on it, when they went back to market. We were raising them for the market.

Nobody raised them for wool?

Uh, not too much, no. You'd have to go back well beyond my time before you got to where you, the women used the wool for . . .

I thought there might be a market for it.

As I recall we had a very small amount that we could market some, but not much. It was not a commercial item.

Bob Howkinson, b. 1919

You don't have the big herds like you do now, because they'd take them and ship them. They'd take them in the old Monon Railroad lots of times and ship them on the old, we called them the old milk train. We used to ride that once in a while into Chicago. The old milk train. Early in the morning. And they'd take the beef, the young calves, veal and they'd ship them the same way.

Bob Brannock, b. 1908

Good ol' dogs. I remember we hauled milk down to the milktrain with horses. We used to have an old dog by the name of Mutt and he would follow along. And every dog down near the lake would want to fight with him. Well, anyway, he'd run along under the wagon and the town dogs would always want to get in a fight with him and he'd manuever them under the wagon wheel. And the wagon would run over them and . . . he'd win the fight. He'd never give up on a fight. He was always fighting. You don't see dog fights today. God, when I was a kid there was dog fights everywheres, it seems like.

Dave Howkinson, b. 1916

Did you use the services of a veterinarian very often?

Not too often, no. Occasionally we'd get a horse with colic, and I remember once or twice, we had a vet out to take care of that. And back early in the, must have been in the thirties, probably in the twenties, contagious abortion was a tremendous problem among dairy herds. They have a vaccine for it now. Cows would lose their calves prematurely. And very often in instances like that, they would retain the afterbirth. A lot of us learned to do what you'd call "clean a cow" ourselves, but sometimes you'd have to have a vet out to take care of that situation.

Lawrence Turnquist, b. 1905

Farmers just usually had the home remedies and they had a lot of stock. And if they died, so what. Raise another one, see. Most generally about the animals, unless it's a rare, contagious disease, better than eighty per cent of them would get over it without any treatment, because everybody has a built-in immunity to things like that. But if you got a contagious disease, then you're not going to stop it unless you're the veterinarian.

Vic Taylor, b. 1916

Now I don't recall a vet at all. I can not remember. There may have been an occasion or two where a vet came out, but it was very rare. It was not common practice.

Ray Corning, b. 1929

Years ago there, with the horses, you did most of the stuff there yourself. . . breaking them and training them. I can remember trimming hooves. I can remember shoeing them. Dad would, every so often he'd have a blacksmith come out and they would more or less just come to fit the shoes. Otherwise, he would do the shoeing himself. Of course, the blacksmith had to kinda fit the shoes when the shoes wore down. We never shoed the horses that much, but in the wintertime we used to shoe them because if we were going out on the road they might have trouble on the ice. So we would have them shoed. I can remember where you used to put them down on a block of wood and you would take a chisel, a wood chisel, and that's how you would trim them.

Don Barman, b. 1932

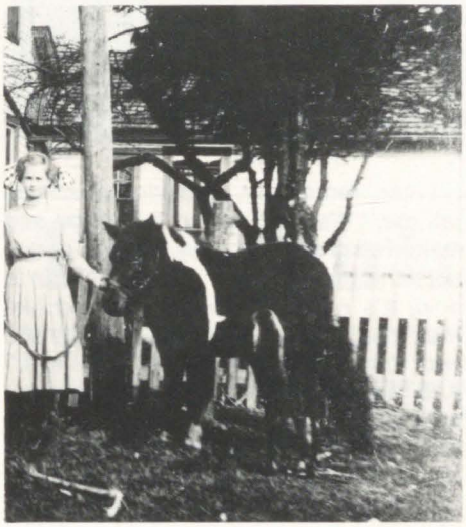
We each had our own work to do. And that was done every night when we come home from school and weekends. That was the first thing that had to be done, was taking care of the animals. See, we had our own animals. One time dad gave mother and I a runt pig. He was gonna die, you know, he was so little. And so then mother and I decided that we would take the pig if dad would give it to us. We'd see what we could do with it. We got a bushel basket. We put the pig in the bushel basket and brought it in the house, kitchen. Well, it went on, mother didn't think much of it. She says, I don't know what that thing's going to do, but anyway, we put up with it.

So later on spring came. We took it out and put it out in the sunshine. You know, that little pig just grew like the dickens and you know, that pig got up to, oh, I guess, 180 pounds or so. Oh it was a big thing. And we had it out north of the kitchen, you know, and so, a hot day came. Real hot day. And that poor pig was just panting and panting. So mother says, "Well, Rosie, that pig is awful hot," she said. "Don't you think we ought to get some water and cool it off?" And I said, sure. So we went and got some. Our water was cold, it was a pretty deep well, you know. Drinking water. So we got a couple of buckets of that water and took it and poured it on the hog. About a couple of hours later we had a dead hog.

So, dad came up. I went down and told dad, I said, better come up. Mother felt so bad she cried about it. And I did too, cause that was our hog, you know. You get attached to animals. I don't remember what we called it, but it was a pet. It would follow us around, go ooh, ooh, something. We had it spoiled, with food, you know, feeding it all the time, but my dad smoothed it over. He said, "Well, it wasn't supposed to live from the beginning." He said, "It was just a little thing." So, we learned never to pour water on a hot hog again. We never had another one. Oh, Lordy!

Rose Buckley Pearce

Farm Chores



My mother did a lot of outside chores. She helped milk, too. It was back in 1914, they milked by hand. And she had to help milk.

Dave Howkinson, b. 1916

We didn't have to play games. We were too busy. I took the milk pails down to my father when he milked the cows. When we come home from school, we had our chores to do. We changed our clothes, washed our hands and our face and we went out and took care of our ponies. We took care of the chickens. We got in the coal and the wood and ah, mother had any little errands for us to do, we did. And I took the milk pails down to my father at the barn. We had our chores, each one of us.

How long did it take you to do your chores from the time you got home?

Oh, we'd be out there sometimes two hours. We used to take the walnuts and ah, we had to husk them, you know. Took the husk off from them. And we'd go take some walnuts and we'd go under that straw pile where the horses, the mules, or something had made holes in the straw pile and it'd be nice and warm under there. My sister and I'd go under there and crack walnuts. Crack a lot of walnuts.

How long did you sit up there eating walnuts?

Oh, I don't know how long. Never twice the same time, I suppose. We got all we wanted to eat of 'em, then we'd go to the house. But the chores had to be done first. We children, my sister and I, always husked the walnuts. We used to sell walnuts for a dollar a bushel.

Rose Buckley Pearce

Well, naturally the girls would be helping their mother, you know. The boys, most generally, they're out cleaning the barn or feeding, you know. My dad was out in the field plowing or whatever.

Would the girls feed the chickens?

No, that would be the boys. Boys most generally done the chores. That was part of the chores. The girls would be in helping their mother can or whatever in the summertime, you know. Make her own soap and everything else. I know I used to help her make soap. Dry apples on the roof.

Jim Baker, b. 1917

Mother, with us five kids, she used to take the butter and eggs up and pay for the groceries, you know. She used to make home-made butter and pay for the groceries. You didn't get too much, you know, either for eggs.

Elmer Bloede, 1912

My mother took care of her chickens. She had chickens and ducks and geese. She always took care of them, that was her. . . .On the north side of the road, where the house was, that was more or less, her upkeep, her work.

Did your mom butcher her animals and sell them or just raise them for pleasure?

Some were used for food. Dad would help her then. Some were butchered and shipped into Chicago. Dad did all the heavy work. But, like I say, for instance, a duck. Why they would get a duck ready to pick the feathers, mother would save all the feathers under the down, under the breast, on the breast. And, she would steam 'em. She had a gunny sack over a boiler of hot water. Then she would steam it. Steam that duck and get the feathers loose. And then we'd start picking all the down, you know, she would save for feather beds and pillows and that sort of thing. And the rest of it, why, I don't know what they did with them. We put them in another container, the other feathers.

Rose Buckley Pearce

There weren't too many kids and oh, I was pretty good in sports when I was young. I played baseball at an old grade school there. But I had a cow to milk in the morning, one or two. And then at night when I got home after I got done with practice at school, I had a cow or two to milk. And then my mother cooled the milk and she poured it in a bottle and delivered to the neighbors. That was seven days a week. Except you didn't deliver on Sunday night. But, otherwise, six days a week you'd deliver that milk. And it kept you till dark and then I guess you was tired enough to go to sleep.

Did you sell the eggs? Did that go with the milk?

No. No. You could bring it in to the grocery store when you went for groceries. Then she had some customers that weekly would stop in and get them, too. Then what you had left, why, went to the grocery store.

Clarence Harding, b. 1918

I was about four years old and I started sewing and made doll clothes.

Eleanor Brannock

I think that's real fine in the rural areas of the old farm days that the children were taught to do things for themselves and learn to sew and to mend their own socks and to do some things that now you throw them away and go buy new.

Bob Brannock, b. 1908

You'd carry in, last thing at night would be, go out to the well and get a pail of water and carry it so they'd have water in the house in the morning.

Lawrence Turnquist, b. 1905

The first washing machine we ever had was one of these cradle jobs.

Did you sit and rock?

Yeah, otherwise it was the washboard, you know. Wear your poor, old fingers down.

Even with the rocking washing machine, you still had to run it through the wringer and the tubs to rinse them, didn't you?

Yeah, we had the old crank wringer. A lot of times she didn't even have that. She just had the washboard and the tub. You'd wring them out.

There weren't that many clothes to wash then, were there?

No. But they were rough. They were getting pretty dirty. Her fingers would hurt, her poor knuckles would be bleeding.

Jim Baker, b. 1917

Mother had a board, two tubs and a board. And of course, in the summer, you know, they washed outside. I don't remember what she did in the winter. But in the summer, she'd be out on the back porch. She'd be all set up there. [In the winter] I can remember the clothes being froze still as a board.

Ray Corning, b. 1929

Then, of course, in the wintertime, you know, when things would be slow, then we would have to go and we would cut wood. We used to sell cord wood to the jail and different places in Crown Point. Then, also we would cut our fence posts and everything, and split our fence. This was all in the winter. Then if we had extra time, we would work on the ice. We would either work at Cedar Lake or at Fancher Lake [Crown Point Fairgrounds] putting up ice.

Another thing that a lot of the farmers, in the wintertime, would go work up there at Letz's, you know, to make a little extra. There was always something going on in the wintertime. People always think that the farmers didn't have nothing to do in the wintertime. Well, man, they had more things to do than you could shake a stick at. All your repair work. You still had your animals to take care of, and then you had to get your wood and haul. You always tried to do something to make an extra buck.

Don Barman, b. 1932

There was a season of the year when certain people, just a few different people, would get in, as a sideline, find a place they could get to with transportation available, such as the bobsleds and the wagons. And they would cut the ice out of the, not the river [Kankakee], but the bayous that they called it. They would cut slabs of ice, fifty or a hundred pounds, and haul it home.

Was there a large icehouse in Hebron?

There was icehouses right around the Hebron country. And they'd pack the ice in sawdust and it would stay pretty good all summer. Cause when you talk about iceboxes, they're just for lucky people. The ones that, well, the ones that's got the built-in air conditioning now, would be the one that would be liable to have an icebox. Most people didn't have any.

Louis Alyea, (1903-1989)

Today, everybody's kind with this eight-hour day, but at that time, years ago, when I was a kid, we had to have the milking done by daylight so we could get out in the field right away at daylight. And that was it. We'd try and have the milking done, go in for breakfast and then we'd be out in the fields by daylight. And, depending on what you had to do, if you were making hay, why then maybe you would get to take it a little bit easy till the dew was off.

I can remember, dad would always tell me, "We'd go out to cut wood and make fence posts . . . cut the tree down, split the fence posts . . . it ain't like it is now. It's no chain saw or nothing like that. You had the old cross-cut saw and two men cross cutting and that's it." And dad would always say, "Don't ever go pick any trees on the edge of the woods," because he says, "They're all the twisted ones, from the wind and everything. They're all twisted." He says, "And man," he says, "you just work like hell and you don't get nothing cause you can't split them for fence posts. They ain't worth a damn." I can remember, in fact, I, to this day when I go out to cut wood, I stay away from the edge of the woods because that was one thing that you learned, you know. The old-timers were pretty sharp, you know. They knew what was going on.

Don Barman, b. 1932

Hired Hands

We had a hired man that stayed right on the farm. Stayed in your home, in the house. Everybody had a hired girl in those days.

What did they pay them?

I think it was three dollars a month or something. It was just the thing when we were young. You had, we had a hired man, that's extra work. You had to have a hired girl to take care of the work created by the hired man alone. Now, how would you like to have another man and a woman living in your home that you didn't know much about? Under your foot all the time? You'd get kind of edgy. But, it was one of the things that was accepted then. That's all.

We were lucky then. Before that, though, we had a lot of them that were, some of them from the city of Chicago. Come out here and know nothing about farming. And it takes quite a while. By the time you got them educated, they were gone. Takes a lot of time to show, you know, there's lots of operations on the farm. Slow process.

Dave Howkinson, b. 1916

The last hired man we had on the farm was in the 1940's. He took care of the horses. He husked corn. He milked cows, cleaned barns. He repaired machinery if he had that capability.

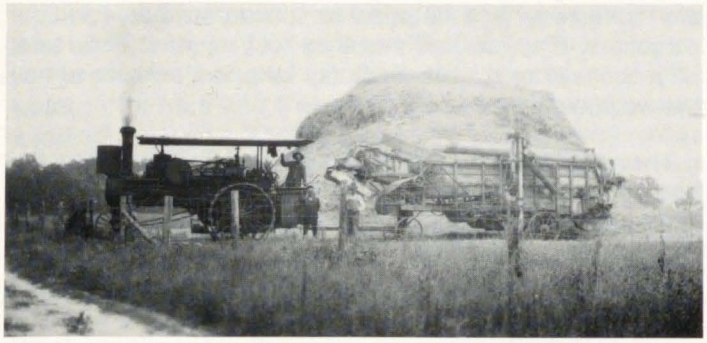
What did they pay him in the early days?

I don't really recall, but they usually lived at the farm. Ours did. So it was, they had room and board there. I do remember that at one time we would pay extra labor a dollar a day and feed them their noontime lunch, or dinner. Then I think that probably hired men in those early days were considerably less than that on a monthly basis. You know, it would be less than thirty dollars a month.

Bob Howkinson, b. 1919

The house [hired hand's house] was very old and very decrepit and very small. It was a single story. I don't remember any outbuilding with it. I remember a small front porch on it and a well. There was a pitcher pump at the kitchen sink. Of course, heating was by a coal stove or wood stove. It was very crowded. It was pretty marginal housing, strictly shelter. My father, I've been trying to remember what my father's income was and I remember that we got a gallon of milk, all the milk we could drink, we got a half a hog a year, or one hog a year, and I think we did get some beef. But it wasn't a whole beef or anything of that nature. But I think his income was, it seemed to me, it was a hundred dollars a month, but I'm not positive on that.

Ray Corning, b. 1929



Threshing

After you got the oats and the wheat cut and shocked, why then as soon as they got dry, they had a threshing machine that, oh they'd take in a whole group. And you'd go and help them and they'd come and help you. And you had a threshing gang. And they'd get the wheat and the oat separated.

Well, in those days some fellow had bought the machinery, bought the engine and the threshing machine himself and then he'd go around to the neighbors and they'd pay him so much a bushel for the threshing. But the neighbors would help, he had to load all the stuff on a wagon and haul it up and throw it up into the threshing machine. The neighbors all got together and done that.

Earl Little, b. 1901

There were from 12 to 16 farmers that went with our so-called threshing ring. And we'd exchange work at that time of year with the machine that came in our neighborhood each year.

Did the machine belong to one man and everyone shared it?

The threshing machine itself and the thresher belonged to one man that was not a farmer. He had the machine and he had farm machines like for threshing time. And he had buzz saws for cutting wood in the wintertime. And he done some roadwork with his tractor. It was too heavy for horses. And there was quite a lot of work in that, and in the neighborhood for a so-called roller scraper and the buzz saw and sometimes they used this, oh, it was a saw mill. And whatever steam engines, that's what it was at that time.

Were there quite a lot of steam engines or just this one that travelled around?

Oh, there was one that come to our neighborhood. And generally each neighborhood had one. The tractors, as we knew them at that time, were not capable of doing the work that the steam engines did. The steam engine, that was the power of the day. And tractors didn't help much.

Louis Alyea, (1903-1989)

Did you belong to the local threshing ring?

Yeah. There was. . . we hired it done in the beginning. Mr. Fell and Mr. Kretz over here, they did custom grain. And then there was seven of us that bought a threshing machine. We bought a Huber threshing machine. And now this is back in the thirties. And we used it, the seven of us used it. We helped each other thresh. For years, you know, we did that. And the machine was stored here on our place.

I remember back in the steam engine day. You see when they originally, when Mr. Kretz had it, they had steam engines. And that was really picturesque. Threshing was terrible. Absolutely terrible. Nowadays you have a combine and you do three times the work that twenty men did. Did the same way we filled our silos. All the neighbors get together and you'd fill each others' silos. Cut the grain, or the corn with the corn grinder. Each one would bring a wagon and then you would hire pitchers, fellows who pitched the bundles on the wagon. And then the farmer would own the wagon and the team of horses. But you always hired extra men and that was a big crew, too. Eight, ten men.

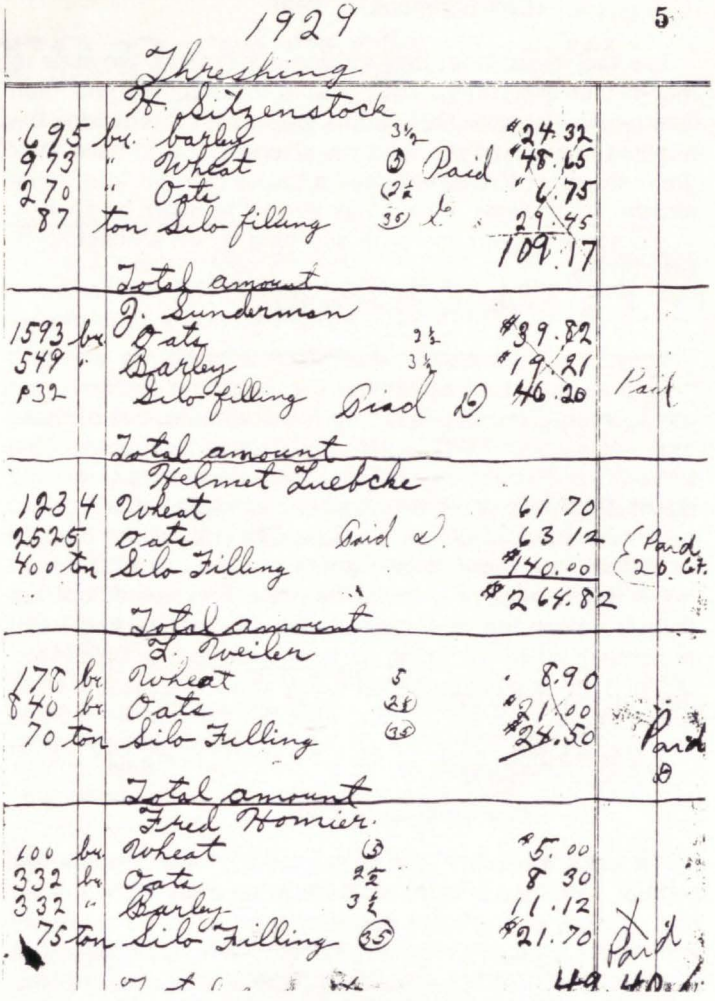
Dave Howkinson, b. 1916

Did you have a threshing business, too?

That was my granddad. He bought that.

What did he pay for that?

About thirty-two hundred dollars, that was for the steam . . . and that was bought in LaPorte, Indiana. There's where the company was. And that was drove down here, way from there. They didn't truck it.



1929 5

Threshing

H. Silzenstock

695 bu. barley 3½ $24.32
973 " Wheat Paid $48.65
270 " Oats 2½ " 6.75
87 ton Silo filling 35 " 29.45
109.17

Total amount

J. Sunderman

1593 bu. Oats 2½ $39.82
549 " Barley 3½ $19.21
832 Silo filling Paid 46.20 Paid

Total amount

Helmut Luebcke

1234 Wheat 61.70
2575 Oats Paid 63.12 Paid
400 ton Silo Filling $140.00 20.67
$264.82

Total amount

L. Weiler

178 bu. Wheat 5 8.90
840 bu. Oats 25 $21.00
70 ton Silo Filling 35 $34.50 Paid

Total amount

Fred Homier

100 bu. Wheat 5 $5.00
332 bu. Oats 2½ 8.30
332 " Barley 3½ 11.12
75 ton Silo Filling 35 $21.70 Paid

From ledger of Bloede & Sons

Did you ever do any threshing?

Oh yeah. I did in my young days. I used to get up five o'clock in the morning and fire a steam engine up. I knew how to run the steam engine. That's what I'm learning them to do now. I belong to the South County Historical Club. I'm learning the young ones how to run the machinery.

Elmer Bloede, b. 1912

I used to drive the hayrack when I was just a little guy pulling the oat shocks in, you know. I can still remember sitting way up high looking on out. Looked like it was about forty feet down there when it was about ten, you know. Sitting way up there driving the team. I was always afraid that wagon was going to tip over and it never did.

Jim Baker, b. 1917

They'd have these bundles, laying along and you'd go out and shock, what they call shockers. You take one under each arm and you'd put them together and shock them down like that, and they'd go together like a little teepee. If you wanted something for cool water, you took a jug and put a rag around it, a wet rag around it, and you set it inside those shocks. Just like it was a refrigerator. That's the way we got our water when we were shocking.

Did the kids do the shocking?

Yeah, yeah. They could go, they'd get to be, oh, thirteen years old. They could pick up a shock and set them down if the shocks aren't too big.

Bob Brannock, b. 1908

You talk about what they did for amusement, they use to thresh and everything. They'd have the pitchers and then they'd have the ones that ran the wagons and some took the bundles in the hayrack. And the pitchers, they'd have their grain shocked, and sometimes a snake can get into those shocks. And they'd know I was scared to death of snakes. You'd see a bundle come up and here it had a snake in it. Boy, I'd go.

Fred (Jim) Dahl, b. 1920

They drove horses for everything. I mean, he wouldn't have a tractor. But I remember the threshing machine that went around. That was in the thirties and it was one of these that was powered with a big pulley on an old tractor. That turned it and you pulled up there and everybody threw the bundles off in it, you know. And I'm very happy that I got to see and work around one of those. That was about the end of it, too, you know. It was going out then. But, the poor farmers still relied on a threshing crew. They couldn't afford to buy a combine or the later type equipment. And I can remember those threshing dinners were just unbelievable. Mashed potatoes and chicken gravy and apple pie and fresh green beans. And, oh my God, I don't know how we worked like that and ate that much at noon. I just couldn't do it now, but everybody did it.

Ray Corning, b. 1929

I would always drive a rack wagon and haul bundles. My brother, he'd be a pitcher. And it was Saturday night and we had to work kind of late Saturday night, and so when we went home, I wanted to go out that night. I let the horses just go. And if you didn't hold them back, in the morning you couldn't get them to go. They'd drag along, just go slow. But at night, if you wouldn't hold them back, why they'd trot and start to running. And I let them run all the way home and the neighbors, they saw me and they told my dad. They said, after those horses worked all day long, he let them run all the way home.

They used to get runaways once in a while, too. I know the horse would start running and you couldn't get him to stop. That's when you had your wrecks, and they'd turn over a rack...

Fred (Jim) Dahl, b. 1920

They used to have the wash basins outside. Everybody'd line up and wash on the bench. You had to have lunch in the morning and then you'd have to have dinner and then you'd have to have lunch in the evening. And on the early days, you'd still have to feed the operator before he went home, I guess.

Bob Howkinson, b. 1919

We were still threshing, but I was pretty small then. I didn't do much but run chores, run errands and stuff like that. Towards the end there, I finally got where I could pitch the bundles onto the wagon.

Don Barman, b. 1932

When I was a child, my father exchanged work, like threshing, silo filling and things that neighbors did together then that they don't do now. And talk about exchanging help. I couldn't wait till I got to be old enough to go threshing, that is, take a man's place, that, threshing jobs. And when I was thirteen years old somebody couldn't go so my father said, "Well, go ahead and get it over with." I pitched wheat bundles right across the creek there where the barn sits now. And those bundles were so big and so heavy and some of them oldtimers, you know, they'd just like you to load and see how big a load they could get, just to wear out these guys. About 10:30 I got so weak and hungry, but I made it until noon. And Mrs. Buckley was probably one of the best, or maybe the best, put out a spread for dinner in the whole threshing ring.

Everybody says, yeah, yeah. So, when dinnertime come, boy, I was ready to go. And we washed up outside in a tub, you know. Had a pitcher pump and then they'd pump in the water in that tub and then we'd get a wash pan and we'd wash up, you know. And then when dinner was ready, we all filed in. Sometimes the tables would be 25 or 30 people. And my, what a dinner and how hungry I was, you know. And what a dinner I ate. And I've never forgotten that, but so then they found out, I proved myself. They found out then I could take a man's place and I got to go. I was a regular then. Yeah.

When did they stop threshing rings around here?

I exchanged work with the Buckley's on the threshing the day the bomb went off at, in Japan. When the war was over, that was '45 or '46, that was about the end of our threshing together. And then prosperity come and hit the farmers, you know, and they all wanted to get machines of their own and do their own work and let the other guy look out after himself.

That was about the last time, but some of the other instances on threshing, you know. My dad, he bought a brand new wagon from Emil Harding in 1929. We'd have a good box wagon that would hold grain to go to the elevator. And then that was my job. With this new wagon I'd catch a load from the separator, like in the morning, and then I'd head off for Belshaw or Lowell. And I'd just barely get back in time for dinner, see. So that was my job because we had a good wagon and had the horses shod because the roads then were all stone. And horses weren't shod couldn't make it on the stone roads. And those were great days.

Of course, I wouldn't want to go to them and I wouldn't want to see anybody else go back to them. But as you drive around the country now you see, oh, I can see all these farms that are has-beens, you know. That were great names in livestock or cattle or hogs and horses. But now they're changing hands or bulldozed the buildings down, just farm ground. When you go by there, there's that memory. I'm thinking of places like the Wheeler-Nichols farm. That was a great dairy farm. Tom Grant farm on 55 was a great dairy farm. And Archie Wheeler farm down there towards Shelby. And oh, many, many others.

Vic Taylor, b. 1916

Hunting and Trapping

Dad'd hunt and tracked all the time. In fact, he taught me how to hunt when I was about six year old. That's when he started me on my gun, with a gun, when I was about six. You could run trap lines with him and everything. Of course, they brought pretty good money then. And, I know I used to hunt woodchucks, too. They paid 50 cents a scalp for woodchucks, the county did, cause there were dams all over and making the cattle step in and break their legs. I made some pretty good, decent change just getting scalps from the woodchucks.

You had to take them to Crown Point at the courthouse. Turn them in there, you know, to get your money. . . I think he [dad] sold most of his to Lambert. I think he sold some down in Shelby. We hunted quail and used to go out and shoot all of our meat. You'd have to hunt it.

Jim Baker, b. 1917

Did you ever hunt for food?

Not really. If you caught something like you'd go out and get quail or something, why that was quite the thing then. Thanksgiving my dad always would take us out on Thanksgiving. We'd go out hunting for rabbits or something.

Rabbits for Thanksgiving, or just to go hunting?

Well, you'd go hunting, that's all. But they could eat them then. They liked to keep the meat. . . quail, I liked quail. They were good.

Did you eat squirrel?

Yeah, we ate squirrel. Squirrel were good. And rabbits, we'd eat the rabbits. And, some of them would go as far as eating coon and possum, but I never had it.

Fred (Jim) Dahl, b. 1920

Well, every farmer used to hunt squirrels, rabbits. There weren't many pheasants in those days and certainly no deer. I have a set of antlers here that were taken at Cedar Lake, but they were when the early deer were here. Then there was a span of probably sixty years when there wasn't any deer around. I'll show you a set of antlers hanging down in the basement that's probably well over a hundred years old.

So in the 1800's there was still deer?

When my mother's side of the family moved here, there was deer here. And there was some bear. My mother was warned against bear and Indians because there were even a few, scattered Indians who would, you know, they'd all been moved out and some of them would come back, occasionally. And as a little girl she was warned about Indians.

Bob Howkinson, b. 1919

I never saw a wild turkey, but I'll tell you what I did see, is prairie chickens. And there was a nice group of prairie chickens out on Route 55 about halfway to Shelby. And when I rode the schoolbus years later after this when we

moved to Shelby, there was probably a dozen prairie chickens. Now those, of course, are long gone, I suppose now. But I never saw a wild turkey. I saw tons of wild geese. The geese used to settle in the rye fields and the winter wheat fields.

I remember a big snapping turtle, and I went down there and waited until finally he stuck his head up and I got him. And I can still remember trying to clean that turtle, you know . . . then my mother frying it in the pan and the meat keeps squirming around. And we also ate squab [pigeon]. Which I don't think I could eat now, but we would take squab, we would go out on Route 2 to Dinwiddy Elevator, which is long gone, and climb clear to the very top and take the squab out of the nest. I mean, they're delicious fried. I mean, it's supposed to be a delicacy, but just the thought of it today, I don't think I could get it down.

Dad said when he was a kid that they shot golden plover by the thousands, by the thousands. And you could make pretty decent spending money. Even back in those days, you know, a mink would bring, God, a mink would bring as high as thirty bucks.

And you know, that was a lot of money when you stop and think if you got a black, perfect mink and it brought twenty or thirty bucks. My God, it was like you got half a month's wages.

We ate a lot of pheasant and I might add, pheasant out of season. But you always had that feeling that, you helped maintain the land, that you had the right to the game on it. So, we ate many a pheasant, quail. Rabbits, I ate tons of rabbits. And there were times when we were short on meat that we very definitely hunted for the meat. I mean, there was no question about it. My father wouldn't go and say, "Hey, you know, we're out of money and can we have a chicken?" I mean, he was a very proud person and he wouldn't do it, so I can remember my father saying, "Why don't you go out and see if you can get a rabbit or two?" You know, and that is a fact. I've done it many a time. You know, here we go again, wild rabbit for Sunday dinner.

Ray Corning, b. 1929

Did your father hunt very much?

Anytime he took a notice when the season was open, when it was allowed. Course in those days I guess they shot most anytime. There wasn't, they were not as strict like they are today. There was plenty of fowl, you know. . . . Then mother would have a barrel. Dad would get her new barrels and she would line it with towels made from sacks of some kind. And then those birds would be put in there, all neat as a pin and sealed up and shipped into Chicago.

Rose Buckley Pearce

What is swamping?

There was no road to go through there. The only time you could travel down that way was in the winter when the ground was froze up. They'd go down in there and cut logs and wood. They called that, the oldtimers they was going swamping, they'd call it.

And when they went swamping, they went on the frozen ground. Generally, they liked to swamp on the bobsled because they could load the wood on the bobsled. It'd be much easier than they put it on the wagon. So, in a hard winter there'd be many more days of swamping than there was in a mild weather. One time I heard them say that year so-and-so there was 100 days of swamping. See, that revealed over three months. Sometimes there's just a few days of swamping.

When people went out swamping, what type of wood did they bring back?

Well, the swamp had big percentage of so-called soft woods. Now, everybody wanted oak and hickory and that type of wood, but there was just a small percentage of these so-called islands in the swamp that you could get to only in the frozen ground. If they could get access to the hard wood like hickory and oak, that was better. But, just lucky people had . . . at that time, this so-called swamp was owned by lots of the people right here in town [Hebron] and the farmers along this, they'd have five, ten, twenty acres swampland, they called it. And the ones that were so-called lucky to have hickory and oak and the highland timber, that was much better than the swamp timber. Elm, sycamore and maple were the ordinary swamp trees.

Was there much trapping?

The so-called trappers, we'll say professional trappers, there were, the ones that I knew would be from our neighborhood, there'd be less than six, we'll say. Four, five or six professional trappers that made their living, make part of their living. The fur that they caught, like coon and muskrat, mink and opposum, that was used for fur. And the farmers, each one of them trapped on his own land and catch eight or ten fur-bearing animals right in his neighborhood along with doing his chores. But professional trappers, they were just called "swamp angels."

At that time, they were usually swamp angels. He made his living in the swamp. And the farm people, some people called them hillbillies. Now there were quite a lot of people moved in from the highland and the hills, so they called them hillbillies. And swamp angels lived in the, down in the swamp, and made their living in the swamp. And there used to be, how do you tell a swamp angel from a hillbilly? What was it now? A hillbilly sat on the porch and rocked. And the swamp angel just sit on the porch. He didn't have a rocker. Generally they were poorer people, but a lot of the swamp [people] lived a simple life.

If they caught a good catch of fur, they had a good season. They'd eat good.

Where did they take the furs to sell them.

Well, evidently it went to Chicago. There's one place that bought all that kind of stuff. One North Michigan Avenue. There was a place there that we called Becker Brothers Fur Company. Becker Brothers. And that was one of many. My dad took the neighborhood fur to them, and he [Becker] bought lots of furs. The fee, the farmers that had, well, three or four pieces, one, five or ten dollars worth. And they couldn't afford to take it into Chicago, so my dad would take it.

Louis Alyea, (1903–1989)

My dad and my uncle had a Green Bay duck boat which is all copper sides. And they had a canvas deck on it. It was a duck boat, they called it. It had points on both ends and it had a hole through the deck on both ends and you could stick a stick down through there and keep the canoe from tipping like that when you were hunting. And then you built a blind around it and hunt ducks in the Green Bay duck boat. I do have pictures of my mother and my sister and several of them in that boat as it set on the Kankakee River there at Schneider.

The girls didn't hunt, did they?

Oh, I had an aunt that made half a living hunting. She's the one that lived on the original farm. Sure, she used to trap just like a man, a lot on the farm.

Roger Schnurlein, b. 1903

Butchering

The farmers always had one or two hogs they'd raise just for their own use. And then the farmers come together in the fall of the year, around November, and they'd discussed it over and they'd just set a date when they were going to do it and usually it was pretty cold weather when they done this. And they had quite a time getting the water hot because the wind was always in the wrong direction.

What was the reason for doing it when it was cold in the winter?

Keep the meat from spoiling.

Were the hogs healthier in the winter?

Yes, they were, yeah. They were kept in a barn and fed milk and corn and pig swill, you know. Oats and milk mixed together and that stuff.

What is pig swill?

That's just oats and ground up corn, and poured skim milk or something over the top of it. Like a swill. It was kinda on the sour side. And then the farmers believed in it, those days, doing it that way. Cause you had all these cows and they separated milk and they had skim milk and all this left over.

Did they make blood sausage?

Blood sausage, yes. And that was a process. The blood couldn't get stiff, you know, would curdle right away. They usually put a couple teaspoons full of salt in there so it wouldn't curdle. And that was a job to take care of the blood. And then that was over with. Then they decided to put the hog in the water. And one tested the water with his finger. And he said it was alright. They didn't have no thermometers at that time, well, what we have today.

You said he would stick the hog?

Yeah. You'd stick him in the neck. In your jugular vein.

With any particular tool?

Ordinary butch knife.

And they would drain the blood into some kind of . . .

Into a pan or a galvanized bucket.

Was that when he was hanging?

Yes, when he was hanging, yes.

Did you knock him in the head first?

Oh, no. They usually stuck them alive so they would get the blood.

So, you'd just go up to him, stick him and hang him up?

Yeah, hang him up. Usually one man was ready when they stuck him and he caught the blood. And they hoisted him up right away to make the sausage. And that process was over with. Then they stuck the hog in the hot water, about 135 to 148 degree water was what they thought. And sometimes they would burn the hog, the hair. Then they had one hell of a time getting the hair off, if they burnt the hair. If it was too hot, it would scald the hog, you know and it would set the hair.

So the temperature had to be just right?

Yeah, the temperature had to be fairly cool or right point. And then after the hog was down in the water, sometimes they had to let it down. 55 gallon barrel wasn't big enough so they had to take the front end first, then turn the hog around and put the hog in backwards to get the other half done. Then usually after they had him scalded, they laid it down on a plank or couple planks that they had laid together there and scraped the hair off. And then they took knives and scraped it real smooth. And after that process was done, one man took care of the head. He cut the head off and you would scrape the head while the other ones were still keeping busy scraping on the hog. And the one that took the

head off, he was getting ready to put it back in clean, hot water to make sausage.

So that was different hot water?

Yes, different water. And that was getting ready for the process of making knotworst [knackwurst]. Ka-not-worst. They put in their sausage usually a heart and tongue. And then just rip off the sow belly, that's what they call it. Sow belly. Right down by the rib cage. That whole strip down there. The tit part. And that would be just all for knotworst.

What part of the head would they use?

The whole head. They would cut it off and cut the teeth out with an ax or something like that. Or corn knife, what they ever had handy there. And then as the head was cooking, this other hog part, what they were still scraping, they took the insides out. They'd cut her down through the middle, took the insides out. Now years ago they used to use the casings for making summer sausage.

The casings?

Yes, they would take 'em out and rinse 'em out from the inside outwards and then they'd put them in fairly warm water so they wouldn't burn. Otherwise they'd fall apart.

Which part of the innards would you use for that?

They'd use usually just about all the casings. They even used a big part of the stomach. They made it some kind of a sausage to put in there. That's the only way they could preserve it, you know, because everything was cooked after that was all done. Like all the sausage was cooked into the big pan there. All the trimmings that they didn't need, that went into pork sausage. And that was fried down after they were all done, completed. That was all fried down and tooken care of by frying pans.

The trimmings?

The women would do that. The trimmings would be ground up for sausage. That's pieces like when you're cutting meat by hand, you would have a lot of odds and end pieces. You'd bone it out and make it in pork sausage. And that was put in a big pan and mixed with some seasonings. Usually years ago, it was Morton Salt seasonings they used. Pork sausage seasoning, you'd see Morton Salt. That's the only cure they had at those times. And then the women took care of that. They took it all in the house and fried it out.

Then they had to render all the lard. They rendered all the lard in that big kettle outside. And one man had to stand there so it wouldn't burn.

Rendered? You mean just boiled it?

Just boiled it until it goes to cracklings. All the hide would go down and shrivel up. That would be called crackling. And you ate them, too, on pancakes and that stuff. That was good.

So you'd eat everything on this hog?

You ate just about everything that was edible there. Then the process was as the women were frying the pork chops down, or well pork sausage, they went out and got a bucket of lard. They poured the hot lard into a big crock. And then they laid their pork chops in there and they laid their pork sausage in there so it wouldn't spoil. You could let it in there maybe for two, three years.

The lard is just the fat off the pig?

Yeah, just the fat off there. That's the only way. They didn't have refrigeration at that time. That was the only way to preserve it. And after all the processes were over everybody got started cleaning up. Everybody washed everything down good. And then they went all back in the house and had a great big meal. You know like it was dinner time or if it was lunch time in the afternoon, till all were real happy after the job was done. They hated to start it. But after it was completed, everybody was happy. They wanted a good lunch out of the deal, which they did.

Tell me about the knackwurst.

It's seasoning that's made out of oatmeal. You cook the oatmeal and use whole allspice, but you grind it through one of them hand grinders, the old coffee grinder deal. And you cooked it. You stalked it. You laid in into a copper broiler and let, maybe simmer for 25-30 minutes in about 130-140 degree water. As the sausage was getting done, the casings were getting done and the sausage would come to the top, that's when you knew they were done. Then you took 'em out and you hung 'em. Laid newspaper down on a cold floor in the back part of the house for overnight. Then next morning you'd go out, get up and hang the sausage onto broomstick handles and the sausage would last, oh, probably two, three months, if the weather was favorable.

When you put the head in the hot water, did the meat just leave the skull?

Yeah, you'd cook it. It's just like putting roast in an oven nowadays or anything in a pan or broiling something. It would just let loose, all the meat would come off.

What about the brains?

The brains you'd usually take out. The brains you would take out and somebody would take that and eat it. They're real good.

When the belly is gone and the guts are out, and the head is off, what happens to the ribs and the rest of him?

Well, the rest of it was cut up in pieces or in chops like the pork loins. The chops come from the middle part of the hog in the shoulder. You got the shoulders first, then comes your loins. Then you got your two hams. Hams are on both sides, loin and shoulder. Sometimes if they wanted to make extra sausage, they will put maybe half of the shoulder into it. It depends how much sausage they wanted to make. But all the people I worked with years ago always made around 40, 50 pounds of that knotworst because they just loved it.

What size hog would you need to get that?

Oh, that would come out of about 300 pound pig. So they would have plenty to eat for two or three months, you know. Then, probably in February, depending on what the weather was, if it was fairly cool yet in March, they would kill a couple pigs again. Do the same thing all over again. They would have pork until July or August or September. And then the process would go on for the next year already. They would have hogs all ready for the next year feeding and eating.

Did you use the feet?

Yes, there was nothing throwed away.

What determined who got what part of the hog?

Usually one farmer would bring a hog in, and he would take it back home after everything was done. And they would rotate every year, maybe one place this year, and then maybe next year they would to go the next place. That's the way it would work.

Louis Beseke, b. 1932

Food

How did you keep your perishables on the farm?

Down in a well. And there was underground cellars. Cave, they'd called them. There'd be a room built down. We have one of them on our farm; a room, we'll say ten or twelve feet square and room big enough to stand up in, all underground. And that would stay relatively cool.

You couldn't keep fresh milk for days at a time, but you could keep it from one day till the next. Cream and churn the butter from this cave. And if you were one of the lucky ones, you'd have a place down there you could have a little corner where you could have a block of ice to keep.

We didn't have that block of ice. We just had the cave. It would stay down to, well, in the summertime, weather like summertime, the cave would stay down to what was fifty or sixty degrees, which was cold for then.

Do you recall your mother doing any canning?

Lots of canning. She had a fruit cellar. There's a room off in the house. Some of them had it under the house, but she had a well-insulated room that she kept her fruit. And she canned two or three hundred quarts of various things every year. And that fruit cellar would hold six hundred quarts. There was enough shelves and that for six hundred quarts. From this year and last year, you could keep canned fruit from one year to the next.

What types of fruit did she can?

Oh, we had apple trees, peaches, raspberries and blackberries that she'd pick in the woods, just wild.

Do you recall cranberries being around in the swamping area?

Yes, and huckleberries. That's another one of the swamp berries. They was even one island down there they called Highland cause it was the high spot in the river country. Cranberry Island they called it. And that was the reason for Cranberry Island was lots of cranberries grew there.

How old were you when you first remember your mother canning?

She canned as long as I can remember until she got too old.

Louis Alyea, (1903–1989)

Right down there is where you went down to the cellar. And you take the butter down, cover it, your milk and cover it, and that basement was cold in the summertime, too. We kept apples in there. It was a dirt floor, just a dirt floor. Dad had it redone, you know.

Rose Buckley Pearce

We had a root cellar on the south farm and we used it. We filled that thing with carrots and turnips and potatoes and squash. And it was one that was dug half in the ground and half out of the ground and then that soil that they used to dig the hole, they covered. . . .

Ray Corning, b. 1929

Before we got an ice box, we'd keep the stuff out in the well house. Boy, it kept the milk cool.

Of course, as far as butchering, they butchered a hog once in a while. Just seemed like they didn't butcher too much beef, just mostly hogs. We used to eat about everything. We'd eat stuff I wouldn't even think about eating now. Oh, heck. I'd go out and I was shooting groundhogs. I'd shoot a young groundhog and Mom would cook it. And you wouldn't even know what you were eating. I mean, they learned to cook everything. And coon. Used to cook the coon. They taste like a goose. I didn't care for those things. Rabbit and squirrel. I wouldn't eat a muskrat, but all the other stuff, muskrat and mink and all that, there seemed to be plenty of it.

Did you go frog gigging?

We went carping. Maybe we'd keep one or something, but I think they took them up to Gary and got rid of them. Mom used to take them and she'd cut them up and pull the mud vein. She'd cut them up and soak them in salt water all night. The next day, man, it was like you were eating spare ribs or something.

Of course, like I say, I've eaten stuff then that I wouldn't want to eat now. But you have to then.

Did much food go bad in the summer?

No. We didn't have that much food.

When you went to the store, what kinds of things did you buy that you couldn't get on the farm?

Oh, golly. Oatmeal. That's definitely, that and coffee, sugar, salt and that kind of thing, the basic things.

I know Dad used to raise watermelons when we were down Fuller Island. When I was about two, I guess, he had me straddling one of them. My feet couldn't touch the ground. That's how big those melons were.

Jim Baker, b. 1917

The people that had maple syrup to sell would bring it into town and sell it to the store. And he'd [storekeeper] say we've got some maple syrup that was made right here in town, would you like some of it? And we'd buy a quart or two of maple syrup that was made right here locally. But we didn't have any maple trees and most people didn't. That was a kind of a business of its own.

Did you use a lot of honey?

Honey? My dad was a bee man. We had honey for our own use and honey to sell.

How many hives did he have?

On a big year, a good bee season, maybe upwards of 100 hives, and after a hard winter and winterkill, maybe there'd only be ten, more or less, that lived. So we had honey, lots of it to sell or barely enough for our own use.

Louis Alyea, (1903–1989)

We used to buy margarine and that was when you had to color it, the coloring came in a little plastic envelope or a cap or whatever. And you'd put that in there and you took a fork and you kept working it in and you turned it yellow. Well, my mother never had time for that, you know. Later on there were eight kids, so I can remember going to high school and when we were out of money, she'd just take white margarine and slap it on two hunks of bread. Well, here's this margarine about a quarter of an inch thick. The kid that set next to me in the lunchroom was Bud Gurner. Well, his folks had a little delicatessen in Lowell. They had it and they ran it out of their home right by the grade school. Well, they had salami. They had ham. They had cheese. So, I remember this one day I got my sandwich out and I looked and here is this God damn margarine. So, I never said a word. I started eating it and Bud Gurner, he's sitting there with a nice ham sandwich, or something. He looks at me and he goes, "Hey, what, hey, you got Philadelphia Cream Cheese today, didn't you?" And I was so ashamed to tell him that it was margarine, "Oh, yeah, this is wonderful, Bud." You know, ha, ha. I scarfed it right down.

And I remember one time we had a batch of milk that didn't test and the inspector told us, we'd have to throw it out. And my dad, it really killed him to throw that milk out so he brought, I don't know how much, milk home and we made cottage cheese. And I can remember this huge dish pan that was almost as big as a wash tub and full of cottage cheese. Well, you know, how do you keep it in those days? You have an icebox where the iceman comes and puts a block of ice in. But I can remember eating that cottage cheese. We were trying to eat it up before it went bad, you know. Cause things were so bad then. Life was just very poor. We weren't destitute, but we certainly didn't have money to go to town.

My grandmother used to can chicken, and oh God, that used to turn my stomach. Number one, it's ugly in the jar. You know, it's all pale and icky skin on it and she would pack this so that we would have meat in the wintertime. So that was always the last thing we got out. Cause when you got down late in the winter, well, get out the canned chicken. And, of course, they made noodles and that's what we used it with. Noodles or stew or whatever. But, God, I used to hate to see that canned chicken come out.

Ray Corning, b. 1929

Did you can much meat?

I wouldn't say that it wasn't done, but we didn't can meat. Meat was cured. We had a smokehouse. At butchering time, there was certain cuts of the meat that would be salted and smoked, and put away for summer. But when it was smoked and salted enough there to keep all summer in the smokehouse, it was specially good or no good, depends on who was tasting it. I never liked smoked ham. But there's people then and now that it's a real special treat. Various farmers sugar cured and that was much better than the salted ones.

Louis Alyea, (1903-1989)

What is frying down meat?

You take the pork chops and cut it off of the bone and just have the meat. You fry that almost done, then you pack it in the jars or crocks, I should say. And you pack the meat in those crocks as you fried it, and you'd pour the grease over them and that formed the lard. And that made it airtight. Then you'd put another one down and put some more lard, running lard on it. You just kept till you filled it up. And when you wanted meat, you just dug into that lard and got your pork chop out and it was always covered airtight. Never spoiled.

I'm sure that you could keep that darn meat for three years in a dark closet and it wouldn't hurt. It would still be fit to eat. It'd be kinda dried out, dehydrated I'd say, but it would still keep in that can there. Oh, I love fried-down pork. Later on, you know, they used to cold-pack beef. This is similar but you don't have a seal on it. You didn't have a cover on this stuff [pork]. You just put it in these jars and you stored it in a cool place. It was ready to eat, all you had to do was heat it up.

My grandparents, way back in the 1800's, would take the milk and put it in pans, just tin pans. They were still there when I was a kid. But they would put this milk in them tin pans and then my aunt, who lived at home also, she would skim the cream off of it with the skimmer. And then they'd feed the milk to the hogs, the skim milk. Feed that to the pigs, and sell the cream. And of course, they'd make their own butter with a regular old-style churn. But cream was skimmed off in pans. You can imagine milking about eight cows and putting that skim milk in a pan. They'd have to leave it sit there overnight. There was no waste because if we got any milk left from the churning, we fed it to the pigs or the chickens or made meal for the chickens. There was not waste to it.

Roger Schnurlein, b. 1903

When we first came, there were a few old apple trees left, but they were long past their prime. We never got any appreciable amount of fruit from them. Somehow or another, we never replaced them.

Well, by that time, cars had got to the point where you could run up into Michigan or over to LaPorte County if you wanted bushels of fruit. And it was always a big event to go some place and buy some fruit, and bring it home and can it.

Lawrence Turnquist, b. 1905

It [canning] was a lot of work. I remember a big container that high and that big around. There were round ends on them. And they used to can in those things. Pressure canning. And then they went to pressure cookers. And then they went to freezing. And then, just like everything else, it disappeared. You don't do it. . .

Dave Howkinson, b. 1916

Hard Times

During the twenties, we'd sell cream. That's getting into, say the 1920's into the '30's, into the depression when nothing sold. We separated milk and sold it to the local people around the Conference Grounds, we called it, the Moody grounds [west side of Cedar Lake]. People around there would come over and buy the cream and a few eggs we had. And a few chickens. And we always had three hundred chickens every year. We had male and female, you know, not like they do today. They order pullets, you know. But in that day we had to take everything they had and they had roosters and you sold the roosters to the people at the Conference Grounds, and try to make a living, which was very hard then when I look back. It was a lot of work separating the milk, getting the chickens ready and selling a few eggs. We didn't know it then, it was just a hard job that's all.

Dave Howkinson, b. 1916

I remember one time a beggar coming down the road, and there was still a lot of people around hard times. And he came to the door and asked if he could chop some wood or do anything for a meal. And it was Sunday and my mother said, "Oh, we gotta feed him." And we had just finished Sunday dinner and we had chicken. It was in the summer. And we had mashed potatoes and we had all this leftovers and I can remember this poor guy sitting on the back porch. I mean, it was like he went to heaven. And he kept complimenting my mother, you know. Oh, what a wonderful cook, Oh, I could never thank you enough. And he just ate until he almost foundered himself. And he was a skinny old guy and he had an old plain Mackinaw [coat] on. And he wanted to stay and work but you know, my father said, well, there wasn't anything he needed to do. But, I ofttimes think of that old beggar. I just wonder, you know, what happened to him. But you saw that quite often. Especially in the late thirties.

Hobos along the railroad track. There was a big hobo camp south of Lowell and these guys, they rode the rails. Just bums. And some of them liked it. They started bumming during the depression. I know a fellow that's successful man. He's dead now. He died last year. He was in his eighties. And he enjoyed it. He said it was wonderful because you never had to work. You travelled all over the country. And he said you just begged. He said you'd go to the door; they'd give you food; they'd give you money. And he did it as a young man.

Ray Corning, b. 1929

World War I was bad because it was hard to get help then, for one thing. And that's when they had more hired help. Prices went up immediately because of the war. And then they went down. The depression came in 1929 and the farmer was in the depression all through the twenties because of the collapse of the price of farm products after World War I.

Dave Howkinson, p. 1916

Farm Related

GRANGE

We were also active in Lowell at the Grange Hall. You know where that is, out east of Lowell? [Two miles east of Lowell on the south side on Route 2]. They'd have dances every Saturday night. So, once in awhile they wouldn't have anybody to call, so I did call the square dances out there for a little while. But not as a regular caller. I'd just assist and I couldn't sing a song like some of them do today. It's a marvelous organization.

It's as old, it's probably in the 1800's because the Grange is probably similar to the Masonic Lodges. It was a farm organization, more or less, but today it isn't all farmers. It's farm or farm related. Anybody can join if they're interested in the Lowell community. They can be a steelworker and belong. You have to be interested in the Grange.

Grange worked more or less, they didn't do anything for the farmer, indirectly you might say. It was a meeting place for the farmers, but they acted as a counselor for the farmer to get through the laws of the state and the nation. That's what they worked for. They still have sort of a policy of farming regulations and things like that. But it was also a social part. A lot of it was just to get together and talk over the things. I would say you'd call that a sort of a study group of people. After we were there quite a while, it became more and more of a indirect farmer group. There was so many of us that didn't farm. But, yet we were farm related. I belonged because I owned this 200 acre farm down here for quite awhile. Mr. Holly, who was with the Crown Feed here, he belonged because he was farm related. He had the feed company. And many people like that. Others might be just people that did a lot of work, businessmen in Crown Point who did a lot of work for the farming community. And others went because of the fellowship.

There was no age limit, and it was no religion hooked with it. Anybody could go, all faiths could go. So, it was a good organization. They always sponsored some kind of insurance through the Grange, you know. You could get insurance. I suppose it would be a little cheaper than if you'd have to buy it direct through some other companies.

Roger Schnurlein, b. 1903

BLACKSMITHING

Every farmer was somewhat of a blacksmith. He did his own machinery fixing. They could do a little like shoe horses or make horseshoes and stuff like that. Similar to this uncle of mine, or granddad of mine, that's an itinerant blacksmith. They needed those. Them farmers that lived, say, way down there in the swamps, they didn't have a way to get uptown so he'd just travel from place to place and shoe them horses all through the country.

But my grandfather, he never farmed. He was a blacksmith, what they call an itinerant blacksmith. He had his

shop on the farm. But he'd load up his tools and his wagon and he'd take off. Well, he went all through the Lowell area and around Hebron. He'd spend a whole week shoeing horses on the way and then, weekend, he'd come home.

Roger Schnurlein, b. 1903

Blacksmith did a lot of welding. When castings would crack, the blacksmith welded them. Did a lot of repair work on them. When I was a kid, I know we used to go over there. [On Cedar Creek at Halsted and Washington Streets.] He had a hole cut in the floor and the creek was right underneath. You could fish there right in the middle of his shop. He had a board, a plank you pulled up and, there, you'd put a line down and fish if you wanted to.

Clarence Harding, b. 1918

HARNESS SHOP

There was a harness shop . . . it was a shop and it had the little shingle roof and a little porch on the front and two windows on the front with the small panes. [Behind the blacksmith shop]. And I used to love to go in there because he had saddles and leather belts and gloves and all types of harness equipment and that odor, you know. As soon as you walked into that delicious smell. I used to try and figure out some excuse to go to the harness shop.

Ray Corning, b. 1929

BEE KEEPING

[Father] had 384 hives of bees and every fall they'd move those bees from his yard there because there was no hunting any more. No flowers for hunting. They would go down on Joe Martin Road, south of Lowell, haul them [hives] down there by truck. And he and Herb Burnham had their bees there so that they could get this river hunting that was smartweed or heartweed. And they raised a lot of buckwheat down there in those days. So that was where these bees got their food to make honey, down on the river. For those days, 300 hives of bees is a lot of hives.

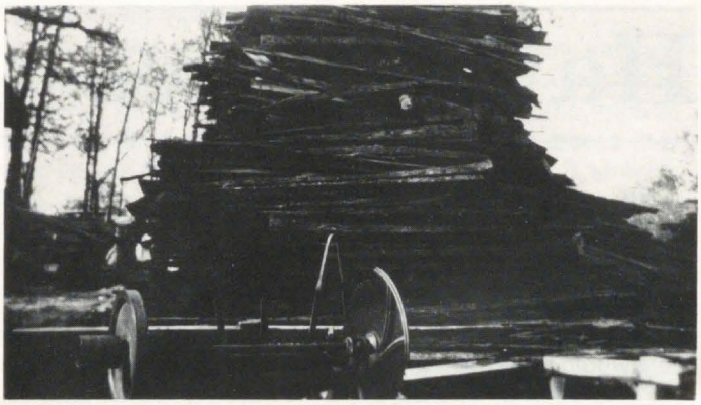
It's a lot of them now. But he made a good living. Today they extract honey. They don't have it in the cone, but my uncle sold all cone honey, in pound, little pound sections and like that. And he also made them for resorts at Lassen's at Cedar Lake. He made honey for the individual, little bits . . . just individual cones that he'd sell there at Lassen's.

Roger Schnurlein, b. 1903

BARN BUILDING

Where did you get the plans to build the barns?

I drew the plans. We do our business, William Bloede and Sons . . . in the contracting business, and I drew all the plans for the homes and farm buildings, what you'd call a timber barn.



How was the construction?

They were all mortised, you know. They were all mortised, all the joints. We had quite a few of them. And then on a later date, we got all into frame barns.

Did you ever have any barn raisings with other farmers coming to help?

Yeah. This barn here was raised. All the neighbors got together. Then you'd pipe hole and push them up. They all go up in sections, in bents. They call it, in bents when they go up. See, every fourteen foot is a bent.

How long did it take?

One day. That one day, the frame is all up. Well, see, we do the framing. The carpenter does the framing, and at the barn raising, the neighbors all help.

Is there a party?

Yes, they get lunch.

Elmer Bloede, b. 1912

SAWMILL

What powered the sawmill?

That was steam. It's the same steam rig what we had for threshing.

How much could you cut in a day?

How many feet? Oh, I would say about 3,000 feet.

With how many men working?

Well, there was my dad and my uncle and we had one man hired. And I went along, too. We used to truck the logs in. We used to get logs from the Niemeyers. Used to get logs from Barmans.

Elmer Bloede, b. 1912

COAL

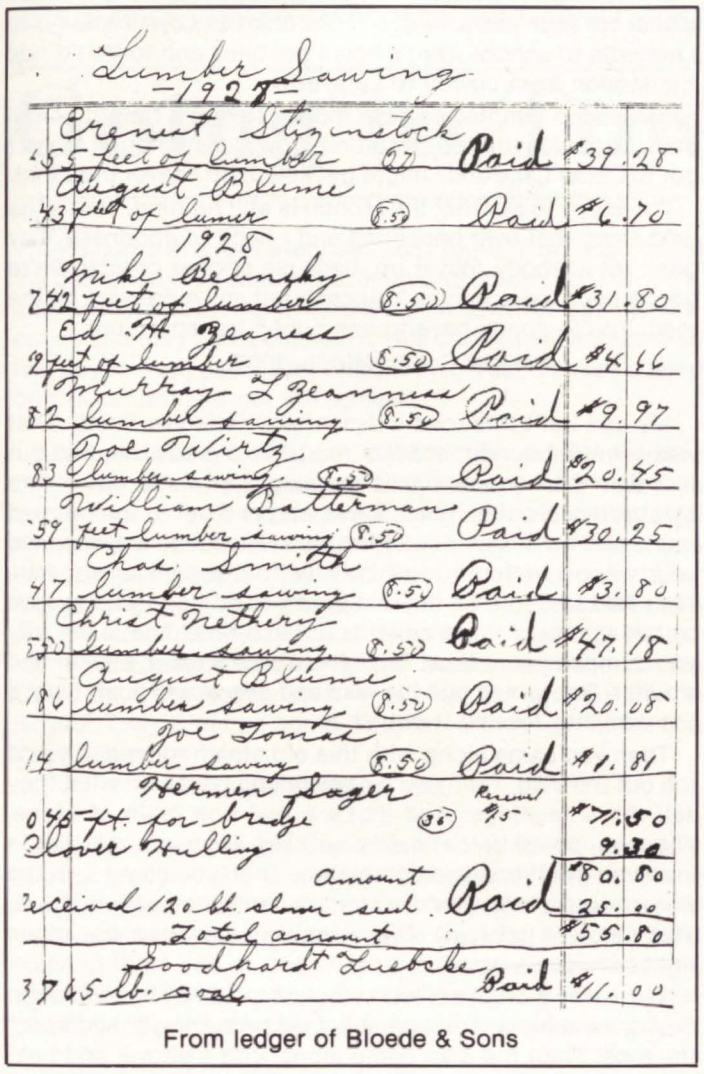
Did you have the coal business, too?

No. What we did, all the farmers got together and said, "Grady, you go and order the carload of coal." See, so we'd order it by the car. See, we had two railroads here in Crown Point, you know, Pennsylvania and Erie. And we used to get it through the Erie. And then we had to unload it. All the farmers went together. I tell you, they helped one another out.

Elmer Bloede, b. 1912

HORSE "TRADING"

Fogel Island [Foley's] or whatever we called it down there, where they used to steal the horses. [They'd] take them down there and sell them. I was never on the island so I don't know much about it.



Lumber Sawing
1928

Ernest Stinnebeck			
455 feet of lumber	(5.50)	Paid	$39.28
August Blume			
43 feet of lumber	(5.50)	Paid	$6.70
1928			
Mike Belinsky			
742 feet of lumber	(5.50)	Paid	$31.80
Ed. H. Geanese			
92 feet of lumber	(5.50)	Paid	$4.46
Murray L Geannese			
82 Lumber sawing	(5.50)	Paid	$9.97
Joe Wirtz			
83 Lumber sawing	(5.50)	Paid	$20.45
William Batterman			
559 feet lumber sawing	(5.50)	Paid	$30.25
Chas. Smith			
47 lumber sawing	(5.50)	Paid	$3.80
Christ Nethery			
550 lumber sawing	(5.50)	Paid	$47.18
August Blume			
186 lumber sawing	(5.50)	Paid	$20.05
Joe Tomas			
14 lumber sawing	(5.50)	Paid	$1.81
Herman Yager		Received $5	
0476 ft. for bridge	(50)		$71.50
Clover Hulling			9.30
		amount	$80.80
Received 120 lb. clover seed		Paid	25.00
Total amount			$55.80
Goodhardt Luebcke			
3745 lb. coal		Paid	$1.00

From ledger of Bloede & Sons

Are there many stories about the thieves down in the swamps?

Oh, I think people out in the rural areas were conscious that there were thieves. Of course, there was other thieves coming around now stealing cattle for beef. It was harder, yet they'd come and butcher the cattle and steal them. They had some of that around. But I don't think there's been much on horse stealing around here for years. Course, when horses were needed, that's when you had the horse stealing.

Bob Brannock, b. 1908

CUTTING WOOD

Now, I know when I was a kid, one of dad's things he done to make money was go out and cut wood. And I used to help him cut wood down by the river [Kankakee]. You'd drive a well down there for water and that water's so sweet, it just made me sick, so I didn't even go back down there. We used to cut wood down there for the bakers in Chicago. Well, we used to do a lot of things. You had to do a lot of different things to make a living then.

Jim Baker, b. 1917

SINKING A WELL

That was a bad job. Putting in a well was a bad job. My mother tells me about putting in the well at the farm. We had Hub Plumbing from Crown Point and in those days, they came and they might stay for a month to put in a rock well. And she said they came and put the well in in the winter. And their gloves were always wet and they had no place to dry them except under the kitchen stove. And she said they'd be piled in there under the kitchen stove to dry. And they came with a horse-drawn rig to come out with the well-drilling outfit and stayed until they were done. So, they were your tenants until they finished.

They lived there the whole time?

Now, they might go home on a weekend. I think they had a failure on the first well, they had to do it over again.

Bob Howkinson, b. 1919

Travel—Roads and Rails

Hebron had a pretty good shopping district in 1874, '80 and '90. In 1874 there was good stores for the time. You could buy all the groceries you needed, and before the railroad came, our groceries come in from, generally from Michigan City. The farmers from here, a couple of times a year would take their produce that they had to sell into Michigan City. There were stores where they could buy the necessities of the time. And some farmers went oftener than twice a year, but that was the common; spring and fall, they'd go to Michigan City to do their trading. And this stagecoach route that we had at the time, this particular house was built for. It was a depot along the way on this stagecoach route from Detroit to St. Louis.

This was one of nineteen stops along the way. There was nineteen of them because that was about a day apart. There was one here, one we'll say about LaPorte, one at Momence. You'll see from here to Momence and from here to LaPorte was about a day's run for a horse-drawn. Somehow people always think of the stagecoach as the one you see in the movies. They were not. At that time they used a wagon with seats on for passengers and whatever they had to haul. In the winter they had a canvas top for it, but it was not the old stagecoach that some people have in mind. It was a wagon built for passengers.

It was about seventeen of these houses all exactly alike, built about the same time, 1849. And you can see the road yet that they travelled to miss the Kankakee marshes. No. 2 up here is crooked and winds around, not because of any reason that you can see now, but because the Kankakee marsh come up and where No. 2 down here turns right now, and goes to Lowell over towards the state line.

What were the major roads to and from Hebron around 1910?

Well, there were lots of roads at that time, but very few of them were other than dirt roads. They're gravel roads. The one out east went out as far as what we call Ailsworth, Ailsworth Switch Road. That was gravel from there into town. Most all the side roads were graded roads, and they were graded by horse power and the steam engines. They were well kept in the summertime, but in the winter, in the rainy season they got impassable.

There was no snow plows as we understand nowadays. Men with the horses would break a road, not getting the snow out of the way, they'd just break a road through the snow.

Did you travel to Lowell for anything?

If you went shopping, why it was easier to go to Chicago in my time than it was to go to Lowell. You couldn't get there by train. Now, on our train here, you could go to Crown Point for about 15 or 20 cents. But Lowell, you'd have such a drive, and that's too far to drive a team of horses. I don't mean nobody went to Lowell, but it wasn't common.

Ailsworth. That's still Ailsworth dominated neighborhood. That's the way they got the name. It was the Ailsworth and then when the railroad came and put in the switch, as they called it, there was freight cars stopped there. They shipped their grain into Chicago generally, and the passengers could get on certain trains. You'd go into the next town or anywhere on the railroad at that time all the way from Logansport to Chicago. You didn't have to have a ticket, you just paid them. There was no ticket sales. It cost ten cents to go from Ailsworth to Hebron or ten cents to go to Kouts and we'll say, a dollar ten to go to Chicago. You could go to Chicago in the morning and come back that evening and spend a good shopping day in downtown Chicago.

When did this train run begin?

Well, it was doing it longer than I can remember. I think Ailsworth switch stop probably started, well, not long after, right after the Civil War time.

Louis Alyea, (1903-1989)

We would go up to our grandmother's at Creston, Indiana; mother's mother just most any time that they'd take a notion to load us all in and take us. One time we went in the bobsled, I remember. They had to heat the wood. They had some wood and some bricks all heated up and straw in that sleigh, blankets down. That's quite a ways in those days. Had a team of horses to pull the sleigh. We came back the same day, cause Dad had his chores to do.

Rose Buckley Pearce

The first year we didn't have a car. But then we didn't go very many places either. But after that we got a Ford touring car. I don't remember what year it was. The conventional black Ford. This was before the Model A. This was the Model T. Had coil ignition and crank to start it. . . . There was no battery to it. That was the Model A that had the starter and the battery. Cars have come a long ways, too.

The more important roads in the area were gravel, crushed stone. But we had a lot of dirt roads. . . . There were months on end when you didn't go out there with an automobile. But oh that mud was too deep or the ruts were too deep, or it was too rough when it was frozen.

After we got the car, of course, then it became much more common to run into Crown Point for this, that or the other thing; if the weather permitted; if the roads permitted.

Lawrence Turnquist, b. 1905

I used to go to Lowell. I went to Lowell at least many times a year for four years. I'd get the Monon at Lowell and go to Lafayette to school. That's how I got back and forth. I'd ride the Monon from Lowell to Lafayette.

I was also tempted to save money to hop a freight sometime, but I was afraid it wouldn't slow down enough when I got to Cedar Lake and I might get killed. So I never tried that.

I'm happy to say that the Monon is still running. That's the best thing that ever happened and I hope to goodness they don't let anybody fold it up, because sooner or later we're gonna need them things. You can't put any more cars on the road. You're gonna have to use public transportation.

Roger Schnurlein, b. 1903

My dad built this road in front here [Belshaw Road]. That was a water-bound macadam road. We'd grade the road out flat, and then you put crushed slag that came out of the blast furnace or the mills. It was shipped out in the railroad trains and we'd haul it out. First we started with wagons, and your wagon bottoms were built with four by four squares. They had a handle on the end. And you dumped your wagon by taking one of these squares out at a time. That's the way you dumped your stone. Then there'd be a raker, a raker and a puller. One would pull the rake and one would push. That's the way they leveled it out.

Then you came along with this old steam roller and you'd roll out the slag. Then you'd come along next with what they call the screenings. And that's a real fine grain of stone. Then you sprinkle that over your slag. Then you roll that in until you got it covered completely. Then you came with the water wagon, and you'd water this and then rolled it wet. That's how it got hard. That's the way this road was made right here years ago.

You came along later with what was called char and chip. You'd come along and take a hot tar on a sprayer and spray the road. Then the man come along with a shovel and he'd get these real glazy chips and he'd throw the stones on there. We'd call it chip. Chip the road, that's how you got the hard top on top.

To lay the berms. . . . if you required say a ten-foot bed, you'd take a ten-foot by twelve plank and you lay along the side of the road and spike it down. Then you'd throw what they call berm; throw the berm up to it. You'd throw the dirt up to the board. Then you'd fill the stone inbetween.

Well, you did it by hand a lot. When we got the first truck, that was something else. We got the truck back in 1929, later. But before, you'd see a team of horses and the wagons; a stream of them going from where the railroad was unloading the stone and it'd be carried clear out to the job. You'd just see a stream of them carrying stone. You paid them by a ticket. You'd give them a ticket, how many loads they'd get a day. That's the way you paid them. Paid them by the load.

That's how they built the road here in front. I think the last road we built was out on the old Range Line between Lake and Porter County. That was done the same way. 1931 was the last one.

Note: The Macadam Road was named for Scottish road-builder, Robert Macadam.

Bob Brannock, b. 1908

Then they didn't have snow plows or anything. They either scooped the roads out or else, you know, Earl Bailey had a tractor. With two inch planks he made a vee shape for in front of the tractor and hooked it on. He'd go on the road some and push it out a little bit. Mostly, it was shoveled out. And, if they couldn't, if the snow was too deep or too long a ways, they'd just go through the fields and come out on the other side of it.

In the fall of the year they used to take their box wagons, which had the wheels on them, and put sled runners on them. There was not such a thing as snow plows with the county or anything like that.

Fred (Jim) Dahl, b. 1920

Going to Town

They'd come in about every Saturday night. They used to kid my dad when they used to have running boards on their cars, and one Saturday night he went into town to get the groceries and they had a chicken on his car that stayed there all the way in from down Earl Little's. Why that chicken stayed on the car until he got into Lowell.

My dad used to tell about a fellow that lived out where they lived when he was a boy. They used to take their milk into Lowell. . . with the wagon or sled in the wintertime. And he said this fellow, his neighbor,. . . he'd deliver his cream and get the money for it and he'd go to the tavern. He'd stay all day long. And he says, when night came, they'd take him out. He couldn't walk. They'd take him out and they'd put him in the wagon and untie the horses, and the horses would take him home, which was clear out by Lake Prairie School. They'd just go home. They knew their way home and they'd take him home.

Fred (Jim) Dahl, b. 1920

Saturday was the big day to come into town. . . grocery buying. I know we'd come into town down here to Grant Brothers when they had their store there. [On the north side of Commercial Avenue between Mill and Wall Streets.] We'd come in there and do our shopping. Do you know, that was when Tom was still in there and he'd always give us kids a bag of candy or something, you know. That was a big deal.

The first movie come into town. It was down at the Old Grant Theatre. [Southeast of Clark and Jefferson in Lowell. It was torn down in the 1930's.] I think I was, nine or ten years old before they got a movie in there. It was silent then. Well they used to have a lot of the big stars come out here to that theatre, too. A lot of your WLS [radio] people come out there and. . . they had some of the presidents in there. I know one day from school we got to go over there and Coolidge was there talking.

Jim Baker, b. 1917

They tried a skating rink here at one time. I don't think it panned out very good, and then they had the theatre shows. And they'd maybe have a masquerade dance at the old theatre once in a while. But not too much activity.

Rose Buckley Pearce

I don't remember the theatre, but I do remember the department store and Jim Grant. That was Tom's brother. He set in a kind of a little balcony, and when you'd walk in the store he always pulled his glasses down to look and see who it was. And us kids, you know, he'd always give us a sack of candy. That touched your heart when you was little, you know. They don't do that anymore.

They would take a sack of candy. . . only on Halloween night. But a lot of things happened that were good things by good people which will never happen again.

Vic Taylor, b. 1916

I remember dad telling me how they used to haul cheese into Chicago. They would go to Sauk Trail. . . and then to Brown's Corner. That's in Steger [Illinois, west of Dyer, Indiana] or someplace at Halsted Street and Sauk Trail. Anyway, the name of it was Brown's Corner. Well, that's where they would stay for the night. Then they would go on in to the city and do their business and get back there and stay there overnight again and come back. . . And of course, while they were in the city they would pick up whatever stuff they would need; yard goods or supplies that they needed. Basically, most of the supplies you could get here in Crown Point, but there was a lot of it that they would pick up in the city.

Don Barman, b. 1932

There used to be a bootlegger in town. We found out that he was paying a nickel or something for a half pint whiskey bottles, the empty ones. So we'd go around and we'd find half pint whiskey bottles. He run a tavern down there, and he was bootlegging. So we got whiskey bottles, and we'd take them in and he'd buy them from us. Course, we'd go get some more. He'd buy those from us, but we were making a little spending money. And, of course, back then we knew everything. I mean, we knew every spot in town. We'd got out between the two buildings and we'd shimmy up the downspout on top of the roof and play around.

Well, we found out where he kept his whiskey bottles. So we just got some and took them down and sold them to him again, selling him his old whiskey bottles back. We found out where he hid his alcohol, you know. We never bothered it.

How long did it take him to figure out that you guys knew where his bottles were?

I know we sold them to him three or four times, you know. And then he wouldn't buy any more. There used to be a bunch of old machinery in back of his place and he would hide his uncut alcohol in these square five gallon cans. We found out where they were, but we never bothered them. We just as soon sell his whiskey bottles back to him. . . We didn't consider that stealing. That was agin the law for him to do that. That's one way of shutting him down. . .

Jim Baker, b. 1917

Shopping

We would take a trip into Chicago once in a while, by train. I remember I got lost in a store up there one time when I was a little kid. But that was a big deal. If you went on the Monon Railroad in Chicago and did shopping, that was a real day's chore. And you'd come back on the old Monon.

We went up on the old station there in Chicago and got off and walked down to the main State Street store and did our shopping. But, we didn't do it very often. Not very often.

Bob Brannock, b. 1908

Grant's had clothing down here [Lowell]. And then, of course, I lived in Crown Point, too. And they had several, what you call, dry good stores. If you were a seamstress, you could get a lot of your own sewing. And then there was a streetcar, too, that ran from Gary to Crown Point and from Crown Point back to Gary. So, they had quite a few stores in Gary at that time where you could buy your clothes.

Eleanor Brannock

Then we came along with spats in town. When you dressed up, you put spats over your lower shoes. I don't think you ever hear of spats anymore....

Or you bought off Sears and Roebuck. They had everything right in the catalogue. You knew your size, you ordered them out of the catalogue and wait for the mailman to bring them. Sears and Roebuck years ago used to have about everything you'd want. Hardware, even plows. They even sold plows at times. And all kinds of hand tools; clothing, and kitchenware. They sold about everything years ago.

Bob Brannock, b. 1908

My brother used to use the Sears and Roebuck catalogue to make houses. He was an architect...and that was his pasttime. It was very interesting what he'd come up with.

Eleanor Brannock

Did your mom make all your clothes?

Most of them, most of them. Boy's pants or something like that, she'd buy when she had the money, but shirts and stuff she would make. Girl's dresses she would make. A lot of them she ordered from the Sears and Roebuck. That was about the only one thing.

Did they deliver or did you have to pick them up?

They'd come out in mail. There was no place in town or anything like that. You'd send in to Chicago...we'd get bib overalls. Of course, there was bib overalls then, bib overalls and coveralls.

What kind of jackets did you wear?

Denim jackets.

Just like they do now?

Yeah.

Did most men generally own one suit for funerals and weddings?

Generally, if they were lucky, they owned one. Of course, in my time, we didn't have that kind of money then. If you had a clean pair of overalls, why you was all set. You had to go to the closet and pick out your cleanest, dirty shirt and put that on.

Did the girls ever get dresses made from feed sacks?

Oh yeah, yeah. Flour sacks. Mom made a lot of their dresses out of flour sacks and stuff. But sometimes that print would fade out pretty quick, you know. On the farm, they would come in and buy their fifty pound bag of flour or twenty-five pound bag of flour.

Jim Baker, b. 1917

They used to have people, too, that travelled, come out to the places. Yes, that was common. Umbrella man and the medicine man. Raleighs man. Come out and sold you a horse, anything for your cattle, and so on. I can remember many, many times I could see him coming downtown in Lowell with the little buggies and in the back end, they'd open up. They had all the merchandise in the back and sell the merchandise right there on the street.

Bob Brannock, b. 1908

You didn't buy new umbrellas. A man came and repaired your umbrellas. That was rather recent, too. When we were married, they were doing that. They were eating tomato sandwich and they were coming around and fixing your umbrellas.

Eleanor Brannock

Life

When we were first married, our refrigerator was a box outside the window. See, we've been married fifty-five years. And that box, you'd put your milk and stuff outside the window in that box. That's the way you kept it cool. We didn't get a refrigerator until....

I don't remember. I know the iceman used to come around [Eleanor Brannock].

Philly Rene iceman. Fancher Lake. I don't know whether you know where Fancher Lake is [Crown Point Fairgrounds]? We used to make ice there. And Laffer Lake, we used to make ice at Laffer Lake....We'd go out to the lake and they'd cut it with a saw by hand at that time. Didn't have any electric tools.

They'd cut it in blocks and you'd haul it in. There used to be an icehouse north of the present library in Lowell, just north and to the west. A big icehouse in there. And we'd take that ice in there and we'd store it. We'd put straw down, then a layer of ice and a layer of straw. And that's the way we stored it for the summer. And Philly would take this ice then and take it around by wagon and have a little scale on the back. Chop off how much ice you want, weigh it, and sell it that way.

Bob Brannock, b. 1908

...I was born on Fuller Island, in a little shack sitting on the side of the hill...it's right on that S-turn as you go to Shelby. We lived on the lefthand side when you're going south. It was right on the side of the hill there. That was log and they covered it with siding, I think. Whatever happened to it, I don't know.

I think it had two rooms downstairs and the attic. And there was, let's see, one, two, three, four, four kids. Four kids in the attic.

Jim Baker, b. 1917

We were kind of lucky. We had, the outhouse was a two-seater. I think you shared it mostly with the flies. And you had your Sears and Roebuck catalogue out there. And if you were unlucky, why you got the shiny pages left.

Fred (Jim) Dahl, b. 1920

There was always honey on the table, dish filled with corn honey. And you would have the pitcher and there would be a cover, a special cover over that, that was homemade. I have one of them maybe in the corner. The handmade cover would be a knife and a fork outlined, you know and embroidered. And maybe in the other corner would be a plate or something to show it belonged on the table. Be made out of muslin...

We never sat down to eat without a table cloth. And most of the table cloths were red and white and ah, blue with a white check.

Rose Buckley Pearce

The Kankakee River was a beautiful river; not the Marble Ditch. I don't give a riff for that thing, but the old Kankakee River was beautiful. These farmers down in that area there remember, what'd they call that, the Devil's Racetrack. See, the river came down around like...this little racetrack. It went off and went around there and more water was going through the racetrack than through the River. And I tell you what, that was fast water that run down through there in that racetrack. That's where our cottage was around there.

Roger Schnurlein, b. 1903

We got a lot of discipline in the homes in those days. Our family unit was very close in most of the country homes. And the discipline started right in the home, where it should, you know. And from there on to the school, we were taught to respect our teacher. And we were taught never to argue, and all such things, at home so the teacher didn't have it too awfully bad with the different children.

My mother was pretty good with the hands. My father never touched us. He never whipped any of us, but he would give us lectures, which was about as bad. We'd have those meetings around the table. If you did something naughty, why, it was discussed and talked about. You might have to sit on the chair for a certain length of time....Once in a while we'd do some naughty things, like maybe take our shoes off early in the spring and wade in some water, like all children like to do. But, I can't remember of anything too awfully bad.

It was born in us, I guess, to respect them, you know. It was part of our life, I guess. We didn't fear our parents, we respected them.

Rose Buckley Pearce

As long as I can remember, we had a telephone, but not much longer than that, I don't think.

Do you remember when you got electricity on the farm?

There was no electricity while I lived there. I moved into town in 1924.

Did they have it in town?

We didn't get electricity...it was planned when World War I started. The war come along and set everything back ...electricity came to Hebron after World War I.

Louis Alyea, (1903-1989)

...for heating we used to have the grates in the ceiling. You'd open [them] up for the heat upstairs. See, what you did, you had a hole in the floor in the upper levels and you had an open/close grate. Downstairs you had the base burner, or you had an old pot-bellied stove of some kind. The base burner would be burning the hard coal, anthracite coal; not bituminous, but anthracite.

You'd dump that in the top with your bucket. They had the isinglass fronts on there and you had the little rails around it. You'd warm your feet at night, then you'd hurry up and jump in bed. Under a featherbed.

Bob Brannock, b. 1908

When I was seven years old when we moved from what we called the marsh down there where Earl Little lives up to where we moved, we didn't have electricity. We had a Delco plant with batteries in the basement and they'd come on and we'd have what we said electric light and everything. We didn't have any bathroom or anything in the house. And then, I don't know what year it was, but I know my dad got them to come in from Illinois with electricity. And they went down to the elevator, into the elevator around 1940's or something....

The elevator at Belshaw?

Yeah, he got them to bring electricity in there and then a year or so he got them to bring it over to the house. And they had the neighbors sign up and they had to pay so much a month to get it over there. But at first we had the Delco lights.

Did your mom have a wood stove or a kerosene stove?

We had a wood stove in the living room, wood or coal... then in the kitchen she had a wood range with the water along the side of it...Reservoir they called it with the heat and water. And you put your water in the round, metal tub to take a bath on Saturday night.

Fred (Jim) Dahl, b. 1920

I know dad used to grow, raise tobacco up here. . . just for his own use, you know. He used to take it and cut it and hang it and dry it. And he'd make his twists out of it, you know. Oh boy, it was powerful stuff, I guess. He would soak it a little bit when he twisted it.

I tried the tobacco once, a piece of old horseshoe that he had. . . Getting dressed one night to go to town, he had that little piece of tobacco on his dresser and I took it. I ate it. That's the last tobacco I ever tried to chew.

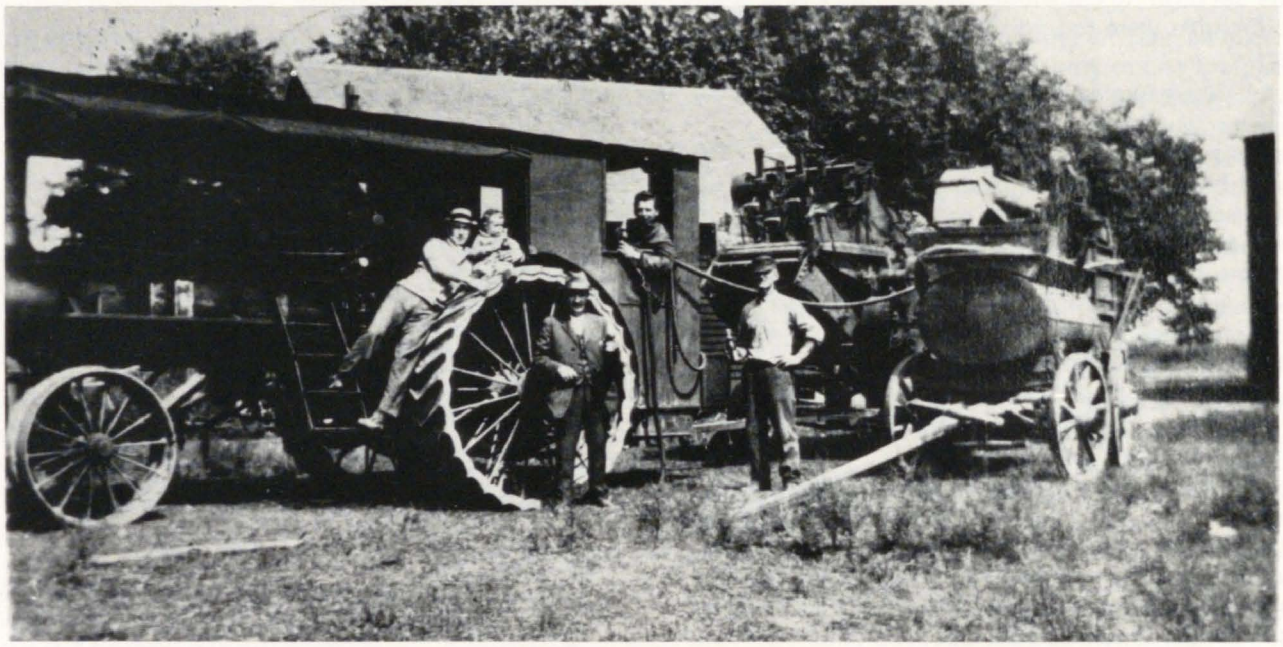
Jim Baker, b. 1917

Well, I started smoking when I was a freshman in high school. Well, maybe even before that because my Grandfather Corning smoked 20 Grand. And he was a great guy to go to the bars and play cards. And he used to take me into town and he'd take me in the bar. He had to have his beer when. . . he'd manufacture an excuse to go to town in our '29 Whippet. So, he'd take me in the bar and set me up on the bar. . . and they had free sandwiches and they had free hard-boiled eggs and so, you know, it was wonderful.

But one day. . . my cousin Ronny and I went with him, and he said, "I'm going to go in and get some cigarettes." So, he went in wherever. He came out and he threw three packs of 20 Grands on the front seat. And he said, "Now, I'm going to go in and have a beer. You boys wait in the car." Well, he didn't get out of sight till we pounced on a pack of cigarettes. Stuffed them down behind the seat. When we got home, took a whole box of farmer's matches, went to the woods, and never got one cigarette lit. It was a real windy day. . . .

So, we said, "Well, let's chew 'um." You know, we had to do something with this tobacco, so we broke 'um open and chewed 'um. And you talk about sick. Oh my God, did we get sick. It was awful. . . my mother couldn't figure out why, what happened, you know. So finally I did tell her what we did cause she was so frightened that. . . I thought, "Oh God, she's going to take us to the doctor."

Ray Corning, b. 1929



Illnesses

Did you have epidemics like measles?

Oh yeah, German measles. . . we used to call them the German measles back, during the war of 1918, somewhere in there. Cause I remember I got 'em. Got 'em real bad, but that's an epidemic. And then they had, during the war, influenza epidemic. And we had quite a few deaths around here at that time, and service boys coming back at the time, 1918.

Bob Brannock, b. 1908

During the epidemic of the flu my mother would take these little, tiny onions, you know, and made sweet onions of them, and she'd give us the goblet full. I didn't get the flu, but I'd still get the onions.

Eleanor Brannock

Well, we wore the asafetida around our necks. I used to have it on a string and have it around my neck. Used to scare 'um [germs] away. Little sack on a string, wore on my neck. I must have been about, what, ten years old, seems like that, cause I remember I went to grade school. Find out who your friends are.

Bob Brannock, b. 1908

When my dad was young, they had diptheria around. He had three brothers. They all died, he said, in about four days. . . just about wiped out the family. . . I just guess around the 1900's, maybe a little before that.

Clarence Harding, b. 1918

I can always remember when my brother, I think he must have been around seven or eight years old and my brother and sister both had rheumatic fever. And when my sister died, she was younger. At the funeral I can remember going with my folks to Crown Point and taking my brother up there. And he had the very same thing, but he lived for a year or so. And one morning I got up and my dad, he was going into town. Well, I didn't know what he was going in for, but he took the car and he banged into the snow drifts and I thought, "Boy, we're having a good time." Why, he was trying to get into the doctor's so the doctor could give him some medicine so he'd [brother] get through the year out there. He [brother] died that night, but I didn't know it at the time. I thought, well, I'm sure going to have fun.

Fred (Jim) Dahl, b. 1920

What did he die from?

Diabetes. He fell off of this horse and it hurt his pancreas, the doctor says. See, diabetes comes from the pancreas, you know. He says that's where that came from. Five years mother doctored with him. In them days they didn't have no medication either for diabetes like they do.

Elmer Bloede, b. 1912

Doctor's fee. . . maybe a couple of chickens or something. Depends on how much money you had, you know. . . maybe they'll charge you $15, $20 or something. But if you didn't have money, why, they'd come out anyhow. Not like it is nowadays. You make a down payment before you go in. You'd give them whatever you had. If you didn't have the money, they were happy. Next time, they'd come back again, that's all.

Jim Baker, b. 1917

I got scarlet fever. I went to basketball practice and I was walking home and it was terrible cold. God, it was cold. And I had taken a shower and I walked from Lowell to the house. And that night I came down with scarlet fever. Well, then it starts through the family. And they come and put the green thing on your door, you know, and you're quarantined. So, I was the first one that got it, so I was the first one out of quarantine. Then when you're out of quarantine, you have to go live with somebody else. So, I went and lived with Maggie Stallburg, who was many, many years the librarian at Lowell.

And I can remember, I got scarlet fever in the dead of winter and my family finally got out of quarantine on this warm, spring day. And my mother got word to me, cause they didn't have a phone, that I was to come home for Sunday dinner. That they were out of quarantine. So, I can recall that day so clear, coming home and here they had butchered, and not told me, my pet rooster.

So, we're sitting at the table and I got this big drumstick and little Donny, or Roger, or Bob, or someone made this remark about my rooster. And I looked, and my mother looked at me, and that was the end of eating my rooster. I couldn't eat any more. But, you know, the rooster was expendable. Sunday dinner we had to have.

Ray Corning, b. 1929

School

I, I didn't like school then. In fact, my first day, I went home, started home, that is. And they had to come and catch me.

Did they have any school buses?

Well, yeah, horsedrawn, you know.

We used to have little plays we put on. I know even when I was in about fourth grade over here at the old grade school, we used to put on operettas over there. We'd have costumes and everything. We put on most of our operetta down at the old Grant Theatre.

Jim Baker, b. 1917

We drove a horse to high school. We drove a horse and buggy to school, my sister and I, until the weather got bad. When it got bad, we'd stay with a great-aunt in Lowell.

How long did you stay with your aunt?

Well, the cold months. My father would pay her. But in the schoolroom, I'll tell ya what the boys used to do to the girls. They used to put a pin in the toe of their shoe, a pin some ways, stick it. And then you know where the seat comes across? They would stick that up against the girl and scare her half to death and hurt her sometimes with that pin. That was naughty.

And then they used to, you know, we wore pigtails in those days, and they'd pull on your hair, pull the pigtails or untie your ribbon. Just foolish little things like that.

How did your teacher discipline her students?

Well, she had a chair in one corner and sometimes they'd have to stand. I never saw a teacher ever touch anybody. You know, whip 'um or anything. I never saw any of that.

Was there a dunce chair?

It was just a chair. I don't know whether it was the teacher's chair or what it was. But she used to have them turn their back to the class and sit there in the corner. And some stood in the corner. That was quite a thing to have them stand in the corner, too.

How long did they have to stand there?

Oh, I don't know. Long enough to know enough to behave themselves when they got back to their seat, I guess. . . .

Oh, another thing we had. We had pencil boxes. We kept our pencils in a pencil box. They're small, they're not very big, length of a pencil and maybe an inch high. But, you'd keep your pencil in there. I don't know whether we ever had a pen when we were in grades or not. You know, you didn't have pens like you have today, given to you, you know. You had a pen and you'd dip it down in an ink, an inkwell. That's what you wrote with when you wrote with ink.

I can see the box that chalk used to come in. It used to come in a wooden box and the top slid back. Well, there were two large boxes about eight inches long, maybe, and maybe four inches high. There was a groove along on the top. And that top just slid back and forth.

Did you ever trade lunches with the kids?

Oh, yes. But that was stopped because Mother didn't approve of it. She found out we were doing it and she told. We used to take our lunch and go where there was this stump, a big old tree stump, and I don't know how we did it, but we'd get over there and spread our lunch out. And you see, it was only a stone's throw home, and I guess Mother or Dad saw us over there. They wanted to know where we were doing over there. "What are you doing over there at noontime?" Oh, we told them we're having lunch, picnic. "What'd you do?" Mother said, "Well, what did you do?" We told her we spread our lunch out. Everybody took what they wanted, you know. She said, "Did your teacher know you were doing that?" We said no. She said, "I don't think you better do that any more." She said, "You sit off and eat your lunch and that's enough. Just eat your own lunch." So that ended the picnic deal.

Do you know what the teacher's requirements were? Did they have to finish college?

Not too much in those days. They could. . . get a permit to teach if they could pass the exam, but then they wouldn't have the college requirement. It wasn't too much then. I don't know if it was two years or what it was. I got a teacher's license.

Do you remember your teachers having any philosophies about how to teach?

I'll tell you, the teacher quoted Ben Franklin quite a bit in my day, the mothers quoted Ben Franklin. Like a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. We had to learn so many of those, adages, I guess. And the teachers. . . the Bible they used as well. Do unto others as you'd like to be done by. Those things were brought in almost daily life in those days.

Rose Buckley Pearce

. . . [we] went to Orchard Grove School. I was about nine or ten years old when we moved out there. Sometimes we'd ride an old Model T Ford hack or sometimes a bobsled. We

used to ride over those head fences, fences down there in the bobsled many a time. Go right over them.

Jim Baker, b. 1917

Ella Goff and Miss Beatty, who were the two teachers, were there through my full nine years at those two grade schools [in Cedar Lake], and they lived in Crown Point, both on north Clark Street. Both were spinsters; they never married, either one of them, had no family and had very few heirs, and living a block apart. You'd think they would drive one horse to the school, but each day Miss Beatty hitched up her horse and drove to Cedar Lake and drove right by Miss Goff's house. And Miss Goff drove her horse and buggy to Cedar Lake. So, they'd each have a horse and buggy, and us kids have to unhitch the horse, put it in the barn. And in the afternoon, the duty of some of the older ones was to go out and get the horses ready so that them two school teachers could go back to Crown Point.

You'd think them two women'd ride together. They were both good Christian women.

Roger Schnurlein, b. 1903

Holidays

New Year's was never so very important. The most important thing was at midnight my father would shoot his gun off, up in the air. The neighbors would shoot and they'd answer back with the guns.

How long did it go on?

Oh, not so awfully long. Maybe 20 minutes or something like that....[On St. Patrick's Day father] would buy a shamrock for all of us. That was a great day. I think my Dad had a few nips that day, too. He'd always have those shamrocks, though. We'd all have a shamrock to wear to school. And we'd have a frosting on the cake that would be green.

Rose Buckley Pearce

EASTER

We celebrated Easter, we did. [We'd] go to church. When we were kids they used to have, Mother had eggs made up in a box. They must've used coffee grounds and beets [to color them].

Elmer Bloede, b. 1912

We hid eggs.

Did you color them?

Yes.

How did you color them?

We took onions and boiled the peelings of onions, was one coloring. And ah, we had cake coloring, different cake coloring. We didn't have the kit of the colorings. Whether they had them on the market or not, I do not know. But we never had them; we made our own coloring, colors. But, ah, the greatest part of Easter for we children was the hiding of the eggs. Quite a while before Easter when we gathered the eggs, we'd hide so many. Then when Easter came, why we would get them, or Mother would go and find them, you know, the old mother's story. She'd pretend she was greatly shocked, that she knew all the time we were hiding eggs. And ah, then we'd count our eggs and the one that had the most got a present of some kind.

Well, this one Easter I remember distinctly Grandpa talked about Easter. Tell us about the bunnies coming and oh, he really got all excited about the bunnies. We went to bed and the next morning we had breakfast and Grandpa started in about the bunnies cause he saw the footprints and he knew there was something going on out there in the orchard. He didn't know what, but he thought we ought to get out there and try to find out what that bunny was doing. He said they was more than one bunny, so we couldn't wait till we got our bonnets on and got out there, so off we'd go. We'd find the Easter eggs. They were candy Easter eggs. Then we found colored eggs, and another one and then the last nest was the best.

And, ah, he would buy the eggs and then he'd buy little ducks and little chickens and I have my rooster that he bought me, pretty good size little rooster, you know. And they would be in the nest where the rabbits had been. The ducks would come, he told us, after the rabbits left. The rabbits laid the eggs. Oh, quite a tale going on about the Eastertime, you know. And ah, that went on even when my brothers were born.

Rose Buckley Pearce

FAIR TIME AND JULY FOURTH

There used to be a big doings at the Lake County Fair on the Fourth of July. And you'd go up there in your horse and buggy. And the fair time and Fourth of July was the big times up there at the county fair. They'd have recreation up there for you, ferris wheels and that sort of thing. A regular carnival sort of thing on the Fourth of July. And the old barnstormer used to come in with the airplanes. The old, old planes. That was one of the first airplane rides I ever had. The old bi-plane jenny come in there and they'd take you out, what was it, five dollars a ride.

Bob Brannock, b. 1908

On July Fourth he [father] had all kinds of firecrackers and sparklers.

Did he shoot off bottle rockets and things like that?

He had rockets. He had wheels. He spent a lot of money on firecrackers, yeah.

Rose Buckley Pearce

The fair was a big time. We'd ride the horses. It was a half-day job to get up here and back with the horses. That was ten miles. We'd load the buggy up and away we'd go to the fair. Of course, then the cars started to come in, and you could go by car.

There was a lot more community activity at that time in the fairs. You didn't come out and see, people didn't come from Chicago to see the fair, but the communities that went to the fairs were around here. It was more of a community within a certain area that got together.

Bob Brannock, p. 1908

The old-fashioned merry-go-round was different. We'd have lover's tub. I don't know if they have that anymore or not. You'd get in that thing and you'd go around one way and it would jerk, turn around and come back around the other way. And then they had the ferris wheel. They had popcorn. They had, what they call cotton candy. I don't know, but the grounds are different. It is more modern, bigger. It was more of a community affair.

When we were children you'd go there and your mother would have the gorgeous lunch all prepared and the table cloth would be spread out on the ground and all luscious food put out and we'd sit down on the ground and we'd eat. Sometimes maybe a neighbor would come over and join us or a cousin or somebody. It was more like a visiting fair. People would visit. They would stop and talk about the crops and the equipment and things.

I would stand up all the way from the farm to the fairgrounds because my mother didn't want us to get our dress wrinkled up on the way. And we had to stand up behind my mother and dad in the front seat, and the three of us in the back. A surrey, you know, and just a team of horses. That was a dirt road all the way down to the farm. Mud! Sometimes it would be almost knee deep to a horse.

Rose Buckley Pearce

LABOR DAY

Well, in Lowell, that [Labor Day] was when they shined, you know...down there by the middle school in Oakland Park, they had the big celebration. They had the ball games. At night they had boxing. And then at midnight they gave away the car, you know.

Yeah, oh yeah. And then they had rows of cap games and knock over the milk and all that, just like at the county fair. Labor Day in Lowell was a big day.

Vic Taylor, b. 1916

HALLOWEEN

Did you trick or treat at your neighbor's houses on Halloween?

That was a great night for my father. Oh, he and a neighbor would, I don't think you ever heard of this, but they'd a tic-tac. They'd fasten that on a window some way and then they'd have a string, I guess, and they'd be out away from the building and they'd pull on that and it would go tic-tac on the window some way. I can't tell ya, but they had a lot of fun. There was mischief, you know.

What did you kids do on Halloween?

We never went out. We were never allowed to go out. We never went trick or treating. But, I'll tell you up here Uncle Pat Buckley...You know, one time, my father was mixed up in this too. Uncle Pat was, of course, born in Ireland, you know, and he was a character. He was very strict about who would come on his place. It was a big old house up here, beautiful home....

So the boys stuffed a man. Somebody got some clothes some place and they stuffed this fellow and I don't know how they got him up on the windmill, but they got him up there on the windmill. Then they had this string across what was just a road then, this highway. And they went over to the barn with the string. Then they got all set and somebody called Pat and told him. Somebody called him on the telephone and said, "Pat, do you know that there's a guy up there on your windmill? We don't know what he's up to?" Well, Pat told Ellen, he says, "I'll get him down from there," in his Irish brogue. "I'll get him, I'll fix him." He got his gun loaded. So he went out there and about that time the boys jerked it [the string]. Give it a good jerk. I don't know what the man did up there, but anyway, Pat says, "If you don't come down out of that windmill," he says, "I'll kill ya," in his brogue. And the man, they'd budge him. They'd jump him or something. Finally Pat had all of it he was going to take. He shot him. And the guy comes down. He just went all to pieces. I don't know how it ended, but I guess the fellows waited and ran. But that's the kind of fun they had in the old days.

One time...well, he was a character, Uncle Pat, and he had an old wagon out there in the yard. I guess people got tired of looking at that old wagon. But anyway, Halloween came. They got that wagon up on his barn. I don't know how they ever did it, but they did. And it was up there almost all summer long. Nobody could get it down.

Rose Buckley Pearce

They used to take wagons apart and put them on top of the high school. Put them together up there, you know.

One guy's old, white horse, he had in town here, they painted black stripes on it.

Like a zebra?

Yeah, it killed the horse, too.

What did they paint it with?

Paint, it poisoned the horse. Most all your paint was lead then, see.

Another Halloween they was doing some road work and they had a grader up here by the square [Lowell]. Parked by the square. One of these old graders, horsedrawn. Some of the guys got it turned around and headed down to main, down to Commercial Avenue, down the hill, towards the tracks. Oh boy, somebody had bought a new car then and that tongue went right through the car. It was parked and all that. We used to be mean, boy. We never got into that much orneryness, you know, destructive like that. We were pretty ornery, but we never did tear anything up. We used to have good, clean orneryness.

Jim Baker, b. 1917

They were in for Halloween tricks, like putting the old kid Lawrence's horse up the balcony of the school one night.

Vic Taylor, b. 1916

I don't know who put it up there, but I guess one Halloween they put a cow or something up on the roof of that building.

Clarence Harding, b. 1918

On Halloween they used to push over the outhouses and some of the fellows got a little smarter. I know in Belshaw there they pushed over one and the fellow was sitting in there. So the next year, why he just moved his up about an outhouse ahead and when they ran up in back of it to push it over, they fell in the hole.

Fred (Jim) Dahl, b. 1920

THANKSGIVING

What kind of feast did you have on Thanksgiving?

Oh, we had rabbits and we had ducks, wild ducks, wild geese and ah, partridge. They didn't call 'um quail. Just the breast of the quail.

How long did it take your mother to fix dinner? Was it all day?

Oh, she would start the day before. Now remember there was five of we children and Mother and Dad and the hired woman and the hired man. There was five, six, seven, eight, nine people to feed.

Rose Buckley Pearce

CHRISTMAS

Christmas was different. You had a lot, I can remember lots of snow. . . we used to have an awful lot of snow seems to me on Christmastime. We'd go out at Christmastime as a church group and go from house to house and sing carols. Now, of course, out in the country like this you might have a small community group come out and do it, but not like you do in town.

And the way I made my Christmas money, we'd go trapping. And I think the boys did some trapping out here, too, for muskrats and skunk and mink. Then we'd sell them. Fifty cents for a pelt or something. That was our Christmas money. That's all we had.

Bob Brannock, b. 1908

We always had a good Christmas tree. I can remember we had the candles on there, on those clips. Of course, after awhile you weren't permitted because of fire.

And I remember one year I received a doll and a doll high-chair. And that was the highchair I found up in the attic after my mother passed away. She used to leave nieces and nephews play with my toys when they came to visit her because I had quite a few aunts and uncles. One year I received one of those iron stoves. We always had a nice Christmas.

My dad used to play all kinds of tricks. There was a day called St. Nicholas Day, and somebody would come dressed up like St. Nicholas or Santa Claus. And come rap on your door, and ask you whether you'd been a good girl or good boy. And, if you were good they left you a bag of candy or nuts or something like that. And if you weren't, they didn't leave you anything. They used to have switches up across the top of a picture. And if you didn't behave you'd get a switch on your leg.

Eleanor Brannock

The big thing was always decorating the Christmas tree. No ornaments. We had to make our own ornaments, pretty near. Pinecones, popcorn, and all that good stuff.

Of course, we were lucky [if] we got anything. I remember one Christmas I got a bag of marbles. And boy I was just as tickled as I could be. A bag of marbles. Then the next morning I was out rolling them up the cellar door, outside, you know. Got my fingernails full of slivers.

Jim Baker, b. 1917

We never bought a Christmas tree. We'd see one in the summertime out in the field someplace and spot it. Then when it come time to cut it, we'd go out, Gladys and I, or Dad and the two of us, would go out and we'd cut it down and bring it in. Now, that'd be a pine tree. They're not very desirable cause they're stickery, you know.

What kind of decorations did you use on the tree?

We used popcorn and we used cranberries, strung up. We used little candles that clamped on the end of the twig. And then one time Dad got some sparklie business. I don't know what it was. It was like a rope and we put that around on it. That was about all. Sometimes Mother would make some little animals or something.

Were the presents you received mostly bought or made?

Mother made some, but most of 'um were bought. The dolls, of course, were not made at home. I remember I got a sled one Christmas, a beautiful thing, flowers painted on the seat of it, beautiful, and my sister got a camera. We'd get bracelets. We'd get nice gifts. We always got nice gifts.

When your mother made your gifts, what kind did she make?

One Christmas everybody got a kiss-me-quick, I guess they called it. That was a crocheted business that went over your head and tied under your chin. I think it was kiss-me-

quick. And maybe you'd get a pair of warm bedroom slippers, you know, little slippers you'd wear in bed to get your feet warm.

Did you hang your stockings over the chimney?

No, we never hung stockings, as I can ever remember. We had no mantel, but we knew Santie Claus come, cause he'd run around the house and we'd hear the jingle of the bells. Then he would come in and he had a big wooden bucket of candy. You know, like you used to see in the stores. Well, he had one of those wooden buckets. That might have been one Christmas I remember. And he had that in one hand and he had the pack on his back. Mother would pack him up, I guess, and he had this Santa Claus suit. He had the hat and the whiskers and everything. Oh, he got a great pleasure out of that.

. . . . and that's when the candles came on the Christmas tree, when he came. Mother would light them then. They were just little candles, about like you put on a cake today. Little things, and she would light them up when Santa Claus was about to come in the house. She'd hear him outside and ah, he had the bells, you know, jingle bells. Then my brother started crying. My older, the oldest of the two brothers. Mother told him what's the matter, what's wrong? He says, "Santa Claus has got pa's shoes on." My mother said a little four-year-old kid that noticed his father's shoes.

We believed in Santa Claus. We girls were pretty good size. They started telling us at school that there wasn't a Santa Claus, and we didn't like that. We came home and we told our parents everybody tells us there isn't a Santa Claus. Well, Mother says don't pay any attention to them. Just let 'um talk. And I told Dad, I said, "is there a Santa Claus?" He says, "Yes there is a Santa Claus and he'll be here Christmas comes."

And then we got smart, we got lucky, listening. You know how children are. They're a lot smarter than people give them credit for, little ones. Well, we got to listening when we weren't supposed to be listening. We had a register up in our room, a floor register so the heat could go up and we'd get there, all three of us, and get our ears down to that register and try to hear something that's going on downstairs. The hired girl would be talking with Mother, and Dad would be reading. He read in the kitchen there. So, ah, we heard quite a little things we weren't supposed to hear. So Gladys and I got pretty wise, so she says let's look and see, maybe they got the Christmas presents already. So we went in one room and we found the camera. And we found the bracelets. We found quite a few things. She says, put 'um right back, don't touch 'um. We mustn't let 'um know that we saw. So we didn't we didn't say anything.

They didn't catch us till we told 'um after everything was out in the open. Santa Claus was over with.

I can recall when I got a little rocking chair. I have it in the living room, and I know that came on Christmas. And I rocked. I never rocked so hard in all my life. That was something new, see, and I rocked and rocked. And everyday I would rock, rock. I'd take my kitty and rock my kitty. I didn't want the doll. I wanted something alive, so I'd take the kitty. And, ah, I know I was told two or three times to rock slowly and behave myself. But, I'd get rough. I'd just go asailing with that chair. You know, a chair will creep when you rock in it, creep a little. So Mother, she got kind of disgusted with it. She said, "Well, we're just going to take that chair away from you. Can't have that chair, if you can't behave yourself in that chair." Cause it had a cane seat in it and of course, that wouldn't stand all of this monkey business of mine, jumping, you know. So, I didn't get my chair for about a week. It was put away, and I talked about my chair a lot. And my sisters had their chairs. They were little ladies, you know. They'd sit down so nice.

So, one day to Mother, I said, "Can't I have my chair ever again?" I imagine I was about four years old. She says, "You can if you learn to behave and be nice to the chair, or you won't have a chair." I said, "I'll be awful nice to that chair if you let me have it." And Dad laughed. He was in the kitchen. They talked about that later. They laughed about it. So, I got my chair, and I would hardly rock in it. I would sit in it, look at my sisters and try to do the way they were doing. And I can remember that, and I don't believe I was over four years old. I don't believe I was. But I've still got the chair.

Rose Buckley Pearce

My folks was so poor to do much for Christmas, but when my sister went to work in Chicago, then she always come down and she just brought every one of us a toy. And that was quite. . . .

Did you have a big meal or a Christmas tree?

Well, my mother never believed in a Christmas tree. I never had a Christmas tree until I got married and had a family of my own. She evidently took a biblical stand that it's not right, but that's her opinion and that was all right with me. But, we have a Christmas tree and I don't see anything wrong with a Christmas tree.

Did you have Santa Claus?

No, we never had Santa Claus. I'm opposed to that term and my mother was, too. Why teach the kids to lie, but then right away, why, you're an old fogey. We tried to bring them up right and teach them the truth and if we teach them lies, well, what we can expect them to do when they get older is lie.

Christmastime is a time when we acknowledge the fact that God gave his son for the Saviour of the world. And how could we associate God with holy and righteous with just a fictious man. . . that's the bottom line. But the world doesn't like that. They like prosperity, fantasy.

Vic Taylor, b. 1916

Christmas is not a joyful time to me because Christmas was a time of anguish. It was a time of wanting and not receiving because there was not money for Christmas. And you know, you'd be very, very lucky just to get one small gift. And it could just be a little toy. . . and the tree was always something we'd cut down, you know, on somebody's lot. And we strung popcorn and cranberries and. . . later as we got a little more affluent, we had electric lights.

We always celebrated every holiday, but Christmas was not one of my fonder times. And it scared me. I've always, you know, you hear about people having depression during the holidays. I've kind of outgrown it now. Of course, at my age, I should. But when I was a younger man, I was really bad

at Christmas. It just was a certain sadness that come over me because I thought about what my parents were going through. They wanted to give us a Christmas, but they couldn't. They didn't have it...

Mother was always a great cook and a great baker. We always had chocolate cakes and she managed very well with what she had to do with. And when we were really down and out and the money was out, we always reverted back to one thing—fried potatoes and pork and beans. And we used to have it for maybe five nights running. And I'd come home from school and I'd be praying to myself, please God, don't let it be pork and beans again today. And sure as hell, I'd walk in that house—fried potatoes...and pork and beans. But, what are you going to do, you know, it was nourishing, filled you up so you ate it.

Ray Corning, b. 1929

SPECIAL DAYS

Birthdays and weddings and all those things, you know, were an excuse to get out and go to the neighbors.

Vic Taylor, b. 1916

Did your dad have regular days off?

If he had a day off, it would have had to have been Sunday. That would have been the only day. I'm sure he worked, you know, six days, plus milking.

Ray Corning, b. 1929

Of course, in the farm area you had to take care of the cattle and that sort of thing. Normal chores you had to do, but you didn't go out and plow the corn and do that sort of thing on Sundays. Changed that now, you never know when they're going to go out in the field. If the weather's right, if it's sunny, they'll go. Doesn't make any difference. So, our whole society's changing on that.

Bob Brannock, b. 1908

Fun and Recreation

What did you do for fun when you weren't working or going to school?

I never could swim, but we used to go down to the swimming hole and my brothers would scare me half to death. That's why I never learned to swim, you know. And then, of course, in the wintertime we'd do a lot of iceskating, an awful lot of iceskating.

Vic Taylor, b. 1916

...you know, you didn't have too many cars and you didn't go off 20 to 25 miles to a picture show or something. You were more apt to have entertainment [at] home....Well a lot of times after the wheat and oats were threshed, why, there'd be a little slack time and they'd get together and have a picnic, and have a ball game.

Earl Little, b. 1901

We used to wade out in the swamp up there by Creston. Spear a carp. You know, in the spring when the carp would come out, you'd get out in there. Why, some of that water was deep. You'd spear a carp. But we used forks, you know, spears were illegal. We'd use a pitchfork. Get them, pin them to the bottom. Then we'd have to go down under water to get them.

Jim Baker, b. 1917

After we had a heavy rain, a real downpour, we would go out in that cornfield and run the corn rows with just a pair of shorts on. And, you know, it would be a hot summer day and we'd run and slide in that mud on our stomachs. But, then the following day, after a rain storm, I'd walk all the corn rows for arrowheads and tomahawks. And I found a beautiful tomahawk head.

Ray Corning, b. 1929

We used to have our, our wars. We'd choose sides and have our wars over here at the sand pit. Everybody had a sling shot. I used to shoot those big, old horse reeds, horse reeds, you know. They'd take the reed out and boy, would they go.

Jim Baker, b. 1917

We'd play with Dad, and he'd let us ride on his back. Take us in the den and we'd play. I don't know what we called that, fox in the den. Fox would catch you and he was the old fox and we were the young ones, you know.

We didn't play with him much during the week. It was usually the weekend when you changed all your clothes. You got your bath. Got all fresh, you know. In the wintertime you had your long underwear on and your nightgown and you'd play. Before you put your nightgown on he'd play the old bear with us. And we'd get on his back one at a time and he'd take us over to the den around the old base burner. We were little then. We enjoyed that.

And he helped us with our school work. He sat down at the table with us at night. Mother would be in the other room sewing, and he'd be at the table with us helping us with our school work.

Now I'll show you what tickled me so. Oh, this tickled me so. You know, I used to laugh so much that they would think I was kind of silly, I guess. [When dad took a family picture] this space would be left for dad to run back. He'd go to that big window and then he'd light a fuse on that camera. He'd get that camera set and then he'd run back and sit down here when he'd run back. I'd laugh my head off. And I even had Mother laughing. We'd get so tickled at him when he would run back.

Rose Buckley Pearce

We used to have a big, yellow dog and he was a good, old dog and we had an old baby carriage, two wheeler. We took that and made a cart out of it and made him a harness. And that dog would pull us all over.

We lived about three-quarters of a mile down a dirt road to the mailbox, you know, and he'd pull us down there and back and have a little fun. We'd put one of the girls in the cart and then we'd catch a cat and turn it loose. Then it'd run to the barn, and that dog would kick off.

You'd think the girls would learn not to get in the cart after that.

After a couple rides they did. But they'd sure take a ride.

Jim Baker, b. 1917

I don't suppose we had much money to go any place. I don't remember where we went. I guess we went to the show, and once in awhile we'd go to church. And to a house party. Used to go to house parties. One girl would make up her mind she's gonna have a party... maybe they'd be four or five couples come down to the party. Come to play games.

What kind of games did you play?

At one time I remember they had a mule where they blindfolded you and you had to pin something on that mule. Led you up to the mule and then you had to pin something. That was a silly thing, wasn't it? They played all those old-fashioned games, button, button. And something where they gotta kiss now, post office. I forgot that game, post-office. I can't tell you how it works now. We all sat around, I know, and you'd get a kiss one time or another for some reason or another.

Rose Buckley Pearce

We helped on the farm. When we used to cultivate corn, my brother used to sit way out on the pole of the cultivator.

Elmer Bloede, b. 1912

Now down at the creek, you know, there'd be big spots in the creek and there was south swimming hole. That's where we went in naturally, you know. Of course, we'd have to put clothes on when we went in up north here.

The swamp, swamp. I used to have a hillbilly band. I'd get a rattlesnake and take the rattlers off of it... and put it in the violin. That made the violin sound so much better with those rattlers in there.

Jim Baker, b. 1917

Oh, box socials they used to have for the grade school. The grade school down there, they'd have box socials. The guy that bought the box had to take care of the girl that he bought the box from. But that was a common thing then.

Bob Brannock, b. 1908

Box socials were quite common. I was too young to participate much, I think, when I left the farm, but there were box socials around... the young ladies would make a box full of food and the boys would come in and bid on them... you'd get a girlfriend and a nice supper at the same time.

Louis Alyea, (1903-1989)

We used to have barn dances around... when I was old enough to go to them. There'd be barn dances all over, square dancing... box socials... all that good stuff. Any more, they don't do nothing.

At the box social the girls would bring a box of goodies, and you'd bid on those boxes... if you wanted to be with one girl and you knew what box she had, you'd go ahead and bid on it. And you bought it and you was her partner then.

So, you generally knew whose box you were bidding on?

Yeah, just about. Then you used to have your cakewalks and all that stuff... used to have taffy pulls.

Jim Baker, b. 1917

Dad used to always say that they used to have the barn raisings. They'd have the barn dances. They used to call them the shindigs. Then in the summertime, they travelled here and there and they played ball. And some would play and some would just go to watch. The younger fellows would play ball and the families would go along to watch. When they had a barn raising, you'd always have a dance. Of course then they had the shivarees. If somebody got married, they'd have the shivaree.

Don Barman, b. 1932

There were quilting bees, hardly to get the quilt made and mostly for just to be sociable. The neighbors'd get together and put the quilting frames out and work on this fancy quilt. And maybe that quilt went for somebody's anniversary, twenty-fifth anniversary or fiftieth anniversary. And they'd give it to these special people. But a lot of times the quilt they made would go to the church and the church would have a social and, the fancy quilt that was made at a quilting bee would be sold for a church benefit.

Louis Alyea, (1903-1989)

Life itself was fun. We played baseball with my cousins on Sundays. And football in the fall. And we did some fishing, not too much. In the winter we'd do some hunting, squirrel hunting in late fall, early fall. Rabbit hunting. The thing that amazes me is that the way deer are come back in this [area]. When I was in my twenties, the thought that deer would be common around here is as farfetched as going to the moon was at that time.

Lawrence Turnquist, b. 1905

They'd always have some place where they could go skating. They'd have maybe some low ground or something that'd have water in it. And it'd freeze over and they'd go skating. And I can remember when I was a young kid, my sister and I walked a couple of miles and the snow was up over the top of the fences. And then it got a crust on it, kind of. And we could walk right over the top of the fences to go over to the neighbors.

. . .And they [friends] got stuck and my dad got out the horses and bobsled. And we went up there and had blankets and everything. Went up there and got them and they came down and they stayed for a couple of hours and then we took them back up and they got their car out from there. And they'd go on back. But a lot of times in snow storms, they'd just cut the fences and go in the fields with the cars.

Fred (Jim) Dahl, b. 1920

I've often told my own children that I wouldn't change a thing in my childhood. Not one day. Because there was always something you could do, I mean, I was perfectly content. If I had the whole day, I'd leave in the morning and I've done it many a time, I'd take my fishing cane pole and I'd fish all day. Of course, a kid had to have his straw cowboy hat. I would pick wild strawberries. You know, I'd brim that hat up. And eat them that day while I was fishing.

There was hunting. There was target practice. It just seemed like I was never bored. There was always something to do. Another favorite thing was to go to the very tip top of the inside of the barn and do swan dives off into the hay, which today, you'd probably kill me if I did it.

Ray Corning, b. 1929

'Round here when there wasn't much to do, why, just like you hear them say, you used to go down and watch the mail train come in. Or the milk train. That's what we used to do. Stick around and watch them loading milk on it.

Jim Baker, b. 1917

RADIO

You had to stay home and make entertainment. . . . I can remember the first radio we had, the old, you'd scratch the old thing with the wire to get a sound. The first one, the first radio.

Bob Brannock, b. 1908

On Saturday night we'd turn on the radio if the battery was up. We could listen to WLS Barn Dance, every Saturday night. We'd listen to all we could turn in. . .WLS down in Nashville, you know. When the battery went dead, we'd have to quit. Just a dry battery. A batteries, B batteries, is what they'd run on. Have to go buy a new battery before you could use it.

Jim Baker, b, 1917

First we had the graphophone, a cylinder that we had to wind and that thing was a big deal scratching and you'd have to put in a new needle or something. And the first radio, you had to put ear things to hear anything. Then when we'd sit there the whole bunch of us would sit there and would listen awhile and pass the earphone to another one. Listen awhile and go around and pretty soon Dad would get tired of that so he'd go and buy a couple of more earphones. Someway he got something. . .an amplifier, and that would bring it out louder.

What did we do in our childhood days? It was constructive, not anything destructive. Something we could learn from. It was like with the victrola. We had a beautiful victrola. It was mahogany, a big one, and ah, when Dad would go into Chicago, he would come back with Galli-Curci records. That was. . . he knew we were learning what opera meant. And ah, he would come home with Mary Garden records. All those different opera singers. And then we had the great tenor. The Irish tenor McCormick. John McCormick, I think was his name. Oh, we knew him well, but we would spend hours listening.

Rose Buckley Pearce

Many of the local farmers came in to hear the Dempsey-Tunney fight. I can remember that yet. Over a scratchy radio. And they all stood around the radio out there on that small porch, and listening to the fight, you know. Everybody sssh, cause the radio didn't come through too good, you know.

Dave Howkinson, b. 1916

The Farm—How Things Have Changed

The farm was a place you did everything. You raised your own fruit. You raised your own milk. You raised your own meat. You made your own butter. You had food, but you didn't have money. So, through the evolution of everything you got rid of anything that you didn't have time for and you went into something where you made money. . . and that's the farm place.

Dave Howkinson, b. 1916

I've seen the old and I've seen the new and sometimes I wonder if we couldn't take some lessons from the way it was years ago.

Dave Barman, b. 1932

Louis Alyea (1903-1989)

Born in Hebron, Indiana (Porter County), his father, William, was a fur trader, Kankakee marsh hunting guide and ran a general store. Louis moved to town and worked as an auto mechanic, eventually owning his own garage. He started buying and selling cars around 1920 and had a delivery route for storage batteries. He was president of Citizen Bank in Hebron from about 1950 until 1970, and owned an automobile dealership until his retirement in 1978. He also founded the Stagecoach Inn historic site in memory of a son lost in World War II. Mr. Alyea passed away on March 4, 1989.

Jim Baker (1917-)

Jim was born on Fullers Island where his father farmed and hired out as a farm hand. The family moved to the town of Lowell about 1923 where his father continued to work as a hired man. Jim Baker worked as a farm hand, laborer, and eventually made his way into retail sales and management. He retired from a local lumber company in 1988 and currently resides with his wife in the town of Lowell.

Don Barman (1932-)

The original Barman family farm was established in 1849, with the original home still standing in Crown Point. Mr. Barman was born on another farm about ten miles distant in Cedar Lake, but has worked the original family farmstead since the 1960's. He then took over the operation of the Barman farm, building a new home next to the original. He is the fourth generation to live on the farm and is a member of the South Lake County Agricultural Historical Society.

Louis Beseke (1932-)

Born in Washington Township, Beecher, Illinois, Louis milked cows in his young days in the Beecher-Momence area, as his dairy farming ancestors did since the late 1800s. After helping with the family butchering, Louis began work at State Line Packing Company in 1957 working in all stages of meat processing, including sausage making. Presently Louis resides about eight miles northeast of Momence and eleven miles southwest of Lowell.

Elmer Bloede (1912-)

Born on the family farm which was established in 1914, Elmer is one of five brothers. The family operated numerous businesses besides running the family farm. From 1914 until 1932 they ran a sawmill; they began construction of barns and houses in 1928; and owned threshing equipment and worked rounds from 1912 to about 1946. Elmer Bloede semi-retired in 1981. He and his wife still reside on the family farm. He is an active member of the South Lake County Agricultural Historical Society, teaching the younger members how to operated the old steam equipment.

Bob (1908-) and Eleanor Brannock

Mr. Brannock was born on Freemont Street in Lowell. He attended Purdue University and Columbia University, graduating in 1931. He began teaching science the same year. From 1939 until 1953 he was principal of Lowell High School; from 1953 until 1957 he was Lake County School Superintendent; and from 1953 until his retirement he was employed by the Crown Point School City Corporation. He and his wife, Eleanor, reside in the town of Lowell.

Ray Corning (1929-)

Born in Creston, Indiana, his family moved early on to the Lowell area, where his father worked as a hired man and later as a mason. Ray Corning worked as a farm hand off and on through his teenage years. From 1947 to 1959 he worked as an auto mechanic; from 1959 until 1962 as a house builder; and began a career in real estate in 1962. In 1970 he opened Corning Realty in Crown Point, where he now resides.

Fred (Jim) Dahl (1920-)

Born on a farm in the Lowell area, his father owned the Belshaw elevator. After graduating from Lowell High School in 1939, Jim Dahl tried farming for a year or so. He then went to work at the elevator until 1983. He is now semi-retired and living in Cedar Lake.

Clarence Harding, Sr. (1917-)

Born six miles west of the town of Lowell, his father started a farm equipment business in 1923, moving the family to town in 1924. Clarence Harding started working full time for his father after leaving the service in 1946, and has headed the Harding Equipment Corporation from 1965 to the present. He currently resides in the town of Lowell.

Dave Howkinson (1916-)

Dave was born on the family farm established in 1912 at Cedar Lake. The family dairying as a business began about 1912. Dave farmed with his father and took over the operation in 1941. He is still living on the farm and has a successful dairy business.

Robert Howkinson (1919-)

Born on the Howkinson farm in Cedar Lake, Bob farmed with his father and his brother Dave until 1960. He then went into the real estate business, retiring in 1988. He is presently involved in tree farming and resides in Crown Point.

Earl Little (1901-)

Earl was born on the family farm on U.S. 41 just south of State Road 2, that his grandfather settled in 1854 after emigrating from New Hampshire. After graduating from Lowell High School in 1920, Earl studied agriculture at Purdue University, as his father had in 1894. Earl graduated in 1924. In 1936 he moved to another farm his grandfather had established about nine miles southwest of Lowell, where he presently resides. After farming many years on the two farm places, Earl is now retired.

Rose Buckley Pearce

The great-granddaughter of Irish immigrants, Dennis and Catherine Buckley, Rose is one of five children who were third generation of Buckleys to be raised in the farm house at the Buckley Homestead. Rose, along with her two sisters and two brothers, attended the nearby Buckley School. After a short absence from the Lowell area, Rose married Murray Pearce and moved to a farm east of Lowell where she still resides. Through her and her family's generosity, farming memories can be shared by all at the 160 acre Buckley Homestead Living History Farm County Park.

Roger Schnurlein (1903-)

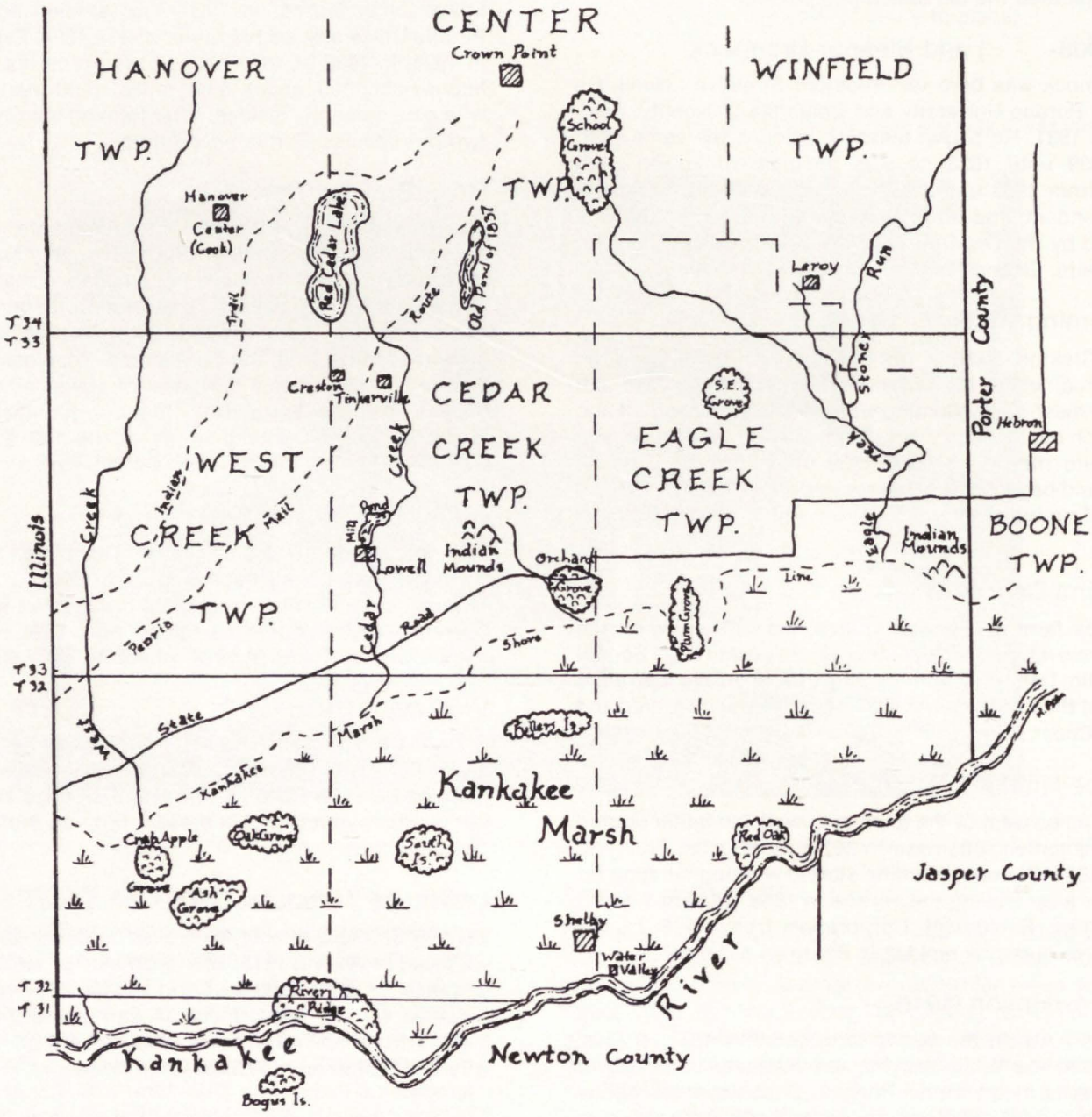
Born on Reeder Road in Center Township, the original Schnurlein farm was established about 1842. Mr. Schnurlein farmed summers when young, and graduated from Purdue University with a degree in engineering in 1926. He moved to the Crown Point area in 1929, where he still resides.

Vic Taylor (1916-)

Born in Cedar Creek Township, Vic farmed with his father until 1939. When he married in 1940, he rented the Leep Farm on Belshaw Road for one year. He rented several other farms until purchasing his present farm on State Road 2 in 1946.

Lawrence Turnquist (1905-)

Born in Chicago, Illinois, he moved to Cedar Lake with his widowed mother in 1919. Lawrence started farming in 1924 and had a dairy business until 1957. He worked as a fieldman for the Department of Agriculture in Northwest Indiana from 1957 until 1976, when he retired. He and his wife still reside on the Cedar Lake farm.



SOUTHERN LAKE COUNTY, INDIANA
Circa 1870